Third Session—1-9

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Official Report

Bengal Legislative Council Debates

15th, 17th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 27th and 28th September, 1943

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BENGAL LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

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The Hon'ble Sir BIJOY PRASAD SINGH ROY, K.C.I.E.

DEPUTY PRESIDENT.

Khan Bahadur ABDUL HAMID CHOWDHURY, J.P.

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2. Mr. W. B. G. LAIDLAW.
3. Khan Bahadur M. A. MOMIN, C.I.E.
4. Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR.

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GOVERNMENT OF BENGAL.

GOVERNOR OF BENGAL.

His Excellency Sir THOMAS GEORGE RUTHERFORD, K.C.S.I., C.I.E., I.C.S.

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(2) The Hon'ble Mr. HUSEYN SHAHEED SUHRAWARDY, in charge of the Civil Supplies Department.

(3) The Hon'ble Mr. TULSI CHANDRA GOSWAMI, in charge of the Finance Department.

(4) The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN, in charge of the Education Department.

(5) The Hon'ble Mr. BARADA PROSANNA PAIN, in charge of the Communications and Works Department.

(6) The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN, in charge of the Agriculture Department (including Rural Reconstruction).

(7) The Hon'ble Mr. TARAKNATH MUKERJEA, M.B.E., in charge of the Revenue Department (including Evacuation and Relief).

(8) The Hon'ble Nawab MUSHARRUFF HOSSAIN, Khan Bahadur, in charge of the Judicial and Legislative Departments.

(9) The Hon'ble Mr. Khwaja SHAHABUDDIN, C.B.E., in charge of the Commerce, Labour and Industries Department (including Post-war Reconstruction).

(10) The Hon'ble Mr. PREMHARI BARMA, in charge of the Forests and Excise Department.

(11) The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi JALALUDDIN AHMAD, in charge of the Public Health and Local Self-Government Department.

(12) The Hon'ble Mr. PULIN BEHARY MULLICK, in charge of the Publicity Department.

(13) The Hon'ble Mr. JOGENDRA NATH MANDAL, in charge of the co-operative Credit and Rural Indebtedness Department.

BENGAL LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS.

1. Ahmad, Khan Bahadur Naizruddin. [Burdwan Division Muhammadan (Rural).]
2. Ahmed, Khan Sahib Fariduddin. [Tippera Muhammadan (Rural).]
3. Ahmed, Mr. Mesbahuddin. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]
4. Ahmed, Mr. Nur. [Chittagong Muhammadan (Rural).]
5. Ahmed, Mr. Sultanuddin. [Dacca North-West Muhammadan Rural).]
6. Ali, Mr. Altaf. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]
7. Amin, Khan Sahib Nurul. [Mymensingh East Muhammadan (Rural).]
8. Aziz, Khan Sahib Abdul. [Presidency Division South Muhammadan (Rural).]

B

9. Baksh, Md. Kader. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]
10. Banerjee, Rai Bahadur Keshab Chandra. [Dacca Division North General (Rural).]
11. Barua, Mr. Dhirendra Lal. [Chosen by the Governor.]

C

12. Chakraverti, Mr. Srish Chandra. [Calcutta General (Urban).]
13. Chaudhury, Mr. Moazzemali *alias* Lal Mia. [Faridpur Muhammadan (Rural).]
14. Chowdhury, Khan Bahadur Abdul Hamid. [Mymensingh West Muhammadan (Rural).]
15. Chowdhury, Mr. Khorshed Alam. [Bakarganj Muhammadan (Rural).]
16. Chowdhury, Mr. Hamidul Huq. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]
17. Chowdhury, Mr. Humayun Reza. [Rajshahi *cum* Malda Muhammadan (Rural).]
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19. Cohen, Mr. D. J. [Chosen by the Governor.]

D

20. Das, Mr. Lalit Chandra. [Chittagong Division General (Rural).]
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22. Datta, Mr. Harendra Chandra. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]
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24. Dutt, Mrs. Labanyaprobha. [Chosen by the Governor.]
25. Dutta, Mr. Kamini Kumar. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]

F

26. Ferguson, Mr. R. W. N. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]

G

27. Gofran, Khan Bahadur Abdul. [Noakhali Muhammadan (Rural).]

H

28. Hosain, The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Saiyed Muazzamuddin. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]
29. Hossain, Mr. Latafat. [Chosen by the Governor.]
30. Hossain, Mr. Mohamed. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]

J

31. Jaipuria, Mr. Mungturam. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]
32. Jan, Alhadj Khan Bahadur Shaikh Muhammad. [Calcutta and Suburbs Muhammadan (Urban).]

33. Kabir, Mr. Humayun Z. A. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]
34. Khan, Maulana Muhammad Akrum. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]

35. Laidlaw, Mr. W. B. G. [European.]
36. Latiff, Mr. Abdul. [Rangpur Muhammadan (Rural).]

M

37. McFarlane, Mr. J. [European.]
38. Maitra, Rai Bahadur Brojendra Mohan. [Rajshahi Division South-West General (Rural).]
39. Molla, Khan Sahib Subidali. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]
40. Momin, Khan Bahadur M. A., C.I.E. [Presidency Division North Muhammadan (Rural).]
41. Mookerjee, Mr. Naresh Nath. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]
42. Mukherji, Mr. Bankim Chandra. [Burdwan Division South-West General (Rural).]
43. Mazumdar, Mr. Haridas. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]
44. Moholanabish, Mr. Nagendra Nath. [Rajshahi Division North-West General (Rural).]

N

45. Nimmo, Mr. T. B. [European.]

P

46. Pal Chaudhuri, Mr. Ranajit. [Presidency Division General (Rural).]
47. Purssell, Mr. R. S., C.I.E., O.B.E. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]

Q

48. Quasem, Khan Sahib Abul. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]

49. Rahman, Khan Bahadur Mukhlesur. [Rajshahi Division North Muhammadan (Rural).]
50. Rashid, Khan Bahadur Kazi Abdur. [Dacca South-East Muhammadan (Rural).]
51. Ray, Rai Sahib Jogendra Nath. [Burdwan Division North-East General (Rural).]
52. Ray, Dr. Kumud Sankar. [Dacca Division South General (Rural).]
53. Roy, Mr. Amulya Dhone. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]
54. Roy, Rai Bahadur Radhica Bhusan. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]
55. Roy, Mr. Biren. [Calcutta Suburbs General (Urban).]
56. Roy Chowdhury, Mr. Krishna Chandra. [Chosen by the Governor.]
57. Roy Chowdhury, Mr. Birendra Kishore. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]

58. Sanyal, Mr. Sachindra Narayan. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]
59. Shamsuzzoha, Khan Bahadur M. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]
*60. Singh Roy, the Hon'ble Sir Bijoy Prasad. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]
61. Sattar, Mr. Yakub H. S. [Calcutta and Suburbs Muhammadan (Urban).]

62. Talukdar, Dr. Kasiruddin. [Bogra *cum* Pabna Muhammadan (Rural).]

W

63. Wahiduzzaman, Khan Sahib Maulvi. [Bengal Legislative Assembly.]

*President of the Bengal Legislative Council.

BENGAL LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DEBATES

Third Session, 1943—No. 1.

THE COUNCIL met in the Legislative Chamber of the Legislative Building, Calcutta, on Wednesday, the 15th September, 1943, at 2-15 p.m., being the first day of the Third Session of 1943, pursuant to section 62(2)(a) of the Government of India Act, 1935.

Mr. President (the Hon'ble Sir BIJOY PRASAD SINGH ROY, K.C.I.E.) was in the Chair.

His Excellency Sir John Herbert's illness.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. Before I take up the business of the House, I think I should report to the House that on the 29th of August last His Excellency Sir John Herbert was very suddenly taken ill and for several days his condition caused serious anxiety. But to our great relief His Excellency has improved much since then and been making slow but steady progress towards recovery. We all sympathise with His Excellency in his illness and wish him speedy recovery and restoration to normal health. I propose to convey the sympathy of the House to His Excellency.

Mr. NARESH NATH MOOKERJEE: And to the Lady Mary Herbert also.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Yes, I thank you for the suggestion. I will add the Lady Mary Herbert's name.

Obituary reference.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Chair has now to perform the melancholy duty of conveying to the House the news of the death of Maulvi Abdul Karim, a well-known educationist and a learned student of Muslim culture, which took place at his Calcutta residence during the last month at the ripe old age of 80.

The late Maulvi Abdul Karim started his public life as a teacher of the Calcutta Madrassah and retired as the Inspector of Schools, Chittagong Division. He was for several years an honorary Fellow of the Calcutta University where he distinguished himself as a sturdy champion of the advancement of Muslim education in Bengal. As a member of the Council of State and of the Bengal Legislative Council under the dyarchical constitution, the late Maulvi Sahib attracted public attention as a keen debater and sound parliamentarian. He was a staunch advocate of communal harmony among the Hindus and Muslims and made extensive tours all over Bengal to achieve this object.

He was the author of several books on Muslim culture, some of which, namely, (1) Islam's contribution to science and civilization, (2) Islam—a religion of Peace and Progress, and (3) The Muhammadan Empire in India,—received wide publicity.

May his soul rest in peace!

I would now request the honourable members to rise in their seats as a mark of respect to the memory of the deceased.

(The honourable members complied.)

Thank you, gentlemen.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Evacuees from Rangoon.

*1. **Mr. NUR AHMED:** Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Home Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) if any measures have been taken by the Government of Bengal to give relief to the evacuees from Rangoon arriving through Chittagong and Calcutta;

(*b*) if so, what are they;

(*c*) whether it is a fact that a memorandum has been received by the Government of Bengal on behalf of these evacuees for taking immediate steps to give larger facilities for providing food, water, shelter as well as necessary steamer and railway accommodation for the evacuees and also for moving proper authorities to approach the Government of Burma to open land route from Prome to Chittagong and for protecting the interests of Indians in respect of their properties left in Burma;

(*d*) if so, what steps have been taken on the same; and

(*e*) how many evacuees from Rangoon have come to Bengal up to this time and of them, how many are Bengalees?

MINISTER in charge of the HOME DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin): (*a*) and (*b*) The Government of India have accepted the responsibility for rendering financial and other assistance to the evacuees from the Eastern War Zones. Under the Government of India Scheme, recoverable advances are being granted to the evacuees, non-repayable grants to the evacuee orphans who are in need of immediate relief, both by the District Officers and by the Special Officer, Evacuees, in Calcutta.

(*c*) and (*d*) No papers can be traced. It has been two years old, I think.

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* Question No. 1 was answered by Mr. Biren Roy on behalf of the Hon'ble the Chief Minister on the 19th July, 1943, but as certain difficulties arose in answering supplementary questions, the Hon'ble the President directed that supplementary questions might be put and answered at the next meeting of the Council.

(*e*) The preparation of such statement will involve considerable time and labour which it will be impracticable for the officers to undertake at present without sacrificing their mare pressing work. The Government of India have decided to have a census, through their own officers, of the evacuees from Burma, and when that census is completed, all information that is required by this question and other questions will be available to the honourable members.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Is the Hon'ble Minister aware that Provident Fund and other dues of Government servants have not been paid yet and that although they have made applications for such dues they have not been given suitable replies?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: As I have said, that is a responsibility of the Government of India and we are only their agents in this connection. If the Government of India sanction these dues, then they will be paid out.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if the recoverable advances are being continued now?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: Relief is still being given. But I am not so sure about the actual advances. Moreover, there are a large number of people who are receiving doles.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if these doles and recoverable advances are being given to the people in Chittagong and Noakhali?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: As far as Chittagong and Noakhali are concerned, two other questions dealing with this subject have been answered. But I should like to take this opportunity to state that by a previous order those payments were stopped. But orders have now been passed to resume payment of these allowances. Further allowances have been granted to deserving persons and with that object in view additional officers are authorised to be appointed so that the thing can be attended to in the proper manner. I hope that so far as Chittagong and Noakhali are concerned, the whole problem will henceforth be satisfactorily tackled.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state when orders were passed for resuming payment?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: Very recently—perhaps a week ago or may be 10 days.

Arrest of Abdul Gani.

2. Mr. NUR AHMED: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Home Department be pleased to state whether it is a fact that one Abdul Gani, son of Md. Omrah Meah, of Pathantuly, Chittagong, an evacuee from Burma, has been arrested in Calcutta under the Defence of India Rules and has been lodged in the Dum Dum Jail?

(*b*) Is it a fact that his old father Omrah Meah has submitted memorials to the Hon'ble Home Minister for making an enquiry into his son's case and to release him after enquiry?

(*c*) If so, will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if he has made any enquiry into the case of said Abdul Gani?

(*d*) If so, what is the result of the same.

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: (*a*) to (*c*) Yes.

(*d*) Government are not prepared to release him now.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state what are the reasons for not releasing him now?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: We consider that in the interest of the State he should not be set at liberty now.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I understand the next question (question No. 3) cannot be answered today as necessary papers are not available.

The Bengal Jute, and Rice and Paddy Enquiry Committees.

4. Mr. NUR AHMED: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Agriculture Department be pleased to state on what date and year the following committees submitted their final reports, (*i*) the Bengal Jute Enquiry Committee, and (*ii*) the Bengal Paddy and Rice Enquiry Committee?

(*b*) Have the Government of Bengal accepted any of the recommendations of these two committees? If so, what are they? If not, why not?

(*c*) Have any special measures been adopted by the Government of Bengal to extend areas under paddy and other crops in Bengal? If so, what are they?

(*d*) What steps have been taken by the Government of Bengal to make the campaign of "Grow More Food" a success?

MINISTER in charge of the AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Saiyed Muazzamuddin Hossain): (*a*) (*i*) On the 5th December, 1939, and (*ii*) on the 16th December, 1939.

(*b*) Yes; two statements showing the actions taken on the recommendations of the Bengal Jute, and Paddy and Rice Enquiry Committees are placed on the Table.

(*c*) and (*d*) Yes; a brief resume showing the special measures taken by this Government to extend the areas under paddy and other food crops in Bengal and to make the campaign of "Grow More Food" a success is placed on the Table.

Statement referred to in reply to question No. 4, showing the action taken on the recommendations of the Bengal Jute Enquiry Committee.

Recommendations—

Chapter X—Regulation of cultivation of Jute [para. 125(A)(1)—Detailed proposals in Chapter V of the report].

Action taken—

The Department's scheme for registration of jute lands with a view to regulation when necessary was in operation before the report was received. Subsequently the Bengal Jute Regulation Act, 1940, and the Bengal Jute Regulation (Amendment) Act, 1940, were passed. Regulation of acreage is now made as required under the powers conferred by these Acts.

Recommendations—

Chapter X—Improvements of marketing standardization of weights and measures [para. 125(A)(2)(*a*)].

Action taken—

This question has been taken up already. Standards of weight being a central subject enforcement of standards must await the bringing into force of the Government of India Standards of Weight Act which prescribes the standards. This Act is not yet in force. The Bengal Markets Regulation Bill, 1941, which is now before the Legislature embodies provision for the standardization of weights and measures within notified area.

Recommendations—

Chapter X—Establishment of experimental regulated markets [para. 125(A)(2)(*b*) and establishment of experimental warehouses attached to regulated markets [para. 125(A) (2)(*c*).]

Action taken—

The Bengal Markets Regulation Bill, 1941, which is now before the Legislature contains provisions for the setting up of regulated markets and registration of existing markets and for the setting up of experimental warehouses attached to regulated markets. When the Bill becomes law, the question of establishing regulated markets and experimental warehouses attached thereto in accordance with the provisions thereof, will be taken up.

Recommendations—

Chapter X—Establishment of Co-operative Societies of Jute Growers for limited purposes [para. 125(A)(2)(*d*)].

Action taken—

A scheme formulated by the Indian Central Jute Committee for the organisation, as an experimental measure, of two Co-operative Jute Sale Societies in Bengal to work in conjunction with the Jute Grading Parties of the Committee has, however, been given effect to during the current financial year on the condition that the Committee will bear the entire expenditure of Rs.5,500 on account of staff and Contingencies and guarantee these Societies against losses to the extent of Rs.2,500 at the rate of Rs.1,250 per Society and that the Government of Bengal should make an advance of Rs.8,000 to these Societies recoverable at the close of the operations each year.

Recommendations—

Chapter X—Collection of statistical information on various matters such as elasticity of demand for jute goods, publication of index numbers of prices of (*i*) raw jute, (*ii*) jute goods, (*iii*) other manufactures that may be used as substitutes.

Action taken—

The matter is under consideration of Government in consultation with the Indian Central Jute Committee.

Recommendations—

Chapter X—Government should cause investigation to be made into (*a*) the costs and conditions of manufacture of jute goods and existing organisation of the industry, and (*b*) organisation and constitution of the Futures Markets [para. 125(A) (3) (*a*) and (*b*)].

Action taken—

The Committee's recommendation in this respect was duly brought to the notice of the Commerce and Labour Department who are principally concerned.

Recommendations—

Chapter IV—Factors affecting the prices of manufactures.

Action taken—

The recommendation in regard to the determination of the data of costs of manufacture and other recommendations affecting the prices of manufacture have been referred to the Commerce and Labour Department for necessary action as concerning that Department.

Recommendations—

Chapter VI—Standardization of grades of raw jute.

Action taken—

The subject has been engaging the attention of the Indian Central Jute Committee for some time past. The opinion of that Body was obtained and the matter is now under consideration of Government.

Recommendations—

Chapter VII—Fixation of the prices of raw jute.

Action taken—

The matter has been engaging the special attention of Government.

Recommendations—

Chapter X—Jute Forecast and Statistics of Stocks—Government should continue to collaborate actively with Indian Central Jute Committee in the enquiry now proceeding until definite results are achieved (page 127).

Action taken—

Action has already been taken on these lines and the final experimental survey by the random sampling method is now in progress. It is hoped that results will definitely settle the technique as well as the cost factor of this method for estimation of acreage.

Recommendations—

The Committee recommended that a Jute Advisory Board with a Jute Commissioner as its principal executive officer for the whole of Bengal should be appointed.

Action taken—

Government has sanctioned the creation of a post of Special Officer, Jute, and his staff to deal comprehensively with all questions arising out of Government's jute policy. An Advisory Board has been constituted under the Jute Regulation Act, 1940.

Recommendations—

Chapter IV—Formation of a price policy of paddy and rice.

Action taken—

As only one member was in favour of fixing a minimum price of paddy and rice and he did not support his argument by any very cogent reasons and as the majority considered that the abolition of the export duty and the imposition of an import duty with fixed quota within which imports will be allowed free of duty as recommended in Chapter V and the marketing reforms proposed in chapter VI would be sufficient to attain to the level of the price parity of other agricultural commodities, Government accepted the views of the overwhelming majority and dropped the question of a minimum price for rice and paddy in normal circumstances.

Recommendations—

Chapter V—Abolition of the export duty.

Action taken—

As the subject matter of the recommendation concerns the Commerce and Labour Department of this Government, this was referred to that Department for taking necessary action.

Recommendations—

Chapter V—Imposition of the import duty.

Action taken—

As the subject matter of the recommendation concerns the Commerce and Labour Department of this Government, this was referred to that Department for taking necessary action.

Recommendations—

Chapter VI—Grading of paddy and rice.

Action taken—

It has been realised that if any grading is to be done, power must be obtained for enforcing the grades through a legislative measure. A provision has been made in the Bengal Markets Regulation Bill to that effect. Unless this is passed into Act, grades of rices in Bengal cannot be laid down and enforced.

Recommendations—

Chapter VI—Establishment of Regulated Markets for paddy and rice with the following facilities:—

(*i*) use of standard weights and measures;
(*ii*) reduction of market charges to the minimum;
(*iii*) abolition of improper allowances and reductions;
(*iv*) supply of market intelligence;
(*v*) storage facilities; and
(*vi*) quick settlement of disputes.

Action taken—

The Markets Regulation Bill, 1941, which is now before the Legislature, contains provisions for the establishment of regulated markets for agricultural produce on these lines. When the Bill becomes law the question of establishing regulated markets in accordance with the provisions thereof will be taken up.

Recommendations-

Chapter VIII—Government should accept and adopt a short period policy based on four main requirements, viz., seeds, manures, water and drainage (paras. 104-117).

Action taken—

The subject is under consideration of Government in consultation with Director of Agriculture, Bengal, and the Irrigation Department.

Recommendations—

Chapter VIII—Transport facilities of paddy and rice (paras. 118-123).

Action taken—

The revision of railway and steamer freights to the level of commodity prices which is a subject of the Commerce and Labour (Marine) Department was referred to that Department.

Recommendations—

Chapter IX—Improvement of crop forecasting and application of the method of random sampling for paddy.

Action taken—

The Director of Agriculture, Bengal, was asked to consider the question and to submit schemes with the estimate of cost likely to be involved if he agreed with the method of survey proposed in this connection. The Director of Agriculture, Bengal, accordingly submitted two schemes for agricultural survey and soil survey for this Province at an estimated cost of Rs.7,28,700 and Rs.21,12,000 respectively and these were approved in principle by the last meeting of the Board of Agriculture, Veterinary and Animal Husbandry. As it is the present policy of Government not to consider any long-term schemes which are not connected with Civil Defence or the prosecution of the war, the schemes are awaiting provision of funds when the financial conditions improve after the cessation of the war. A scheme for the random sample census of Jute and *aus* paddy by Professor

Mahalanobis has been sanctioned at an estimated cost of about Rs.1½ lakhs. Another scheme for sample census of *aman* paddy by Professor Mahalanobis is under examination.

Recommendations—

Chapter IX—Establishment of a Provincial Bureau of Statistics and improvement of trade statistics.

Action taken—

The matter is under consideration of Government.

A BRIEF RESUME OF THE "GROW MORE FOOD" CAMPAIGN.

A Food Production Committee consisting of officials and non-officials was formed towards the end of March, 1942, to advise Government on the measures to be adopted for increased food production in the Province. Unfortunately for various reasons no meeting of the Committee could be called since 22nd June last. The Food Committee approved two schemes for distribution of (1) 250,000 maunds of departmental varieties of *aman* seeds and (2) 19,125 maunds of seeds of mustard, gram and lentil. These schemes were sanctioned by Government at an estimated cost of Rs.16,12,000 and Rs.1,57,000 respectively and the distribution was made on "*sowai*" system, i.e., one maund to be given at the sowing time and 1¼ maunds to be returned to Government at the harvest. Several other schemes as detailed below were also sanctioned by Government in connection with the last year's campaign:—

(1) Scheme for distribution of seeds of English vegetables at an estimated cost of Rs.1,00,000.

(2) Scheme for distribution of one lakh maunds of seed potato at an estimated cost of Rs.15,00,000.

(3) Scheme for distribution of 261 lakhs of improved varieties of sugarcane cuttings at an estimated cost of Rs.3,16,000.

(4) Scheme for distribution of 48,000 maunds of *aus* paddy seeds at an estimated cost of Rs.7,68,000.

On account of various reasons, chief among which are scarcity of good seeds, transport difficulties, etc., the above schemes could not be fully put into operation and the figures below will give an approximate idea as to how far the schemes were operated:—

		Amount distributed or spent during 1942-43.
Aman paddy seeds		200,000 maunds.
Rabi seeds		18,990 ,,
(Gram	6,962 mds.	
Lentil	7,811 ,,	
Mustard	4,217 ,,	
	18,990").	
English Vegetables		Rs. 8,661
Potato seeds		Rs. 3,28,000
Sugarcane cuttings		260 lakh cuttings.

Figures for distribution of *aus* seeds are not yet available.

In order to impress in the minds of the public the necessity of growing more food, extensive propaganda was carried on last year by means of lectures and by wide distribution of leaflets, posters, as well as by the display of hoardings, kiosks, magic lantern slides, etc. Appeals by the then Hon'ble Chief Minister and the Hon'ble Minister for Agriculture were also issued to the Members of the Legislature, landlords, Chairmen of District Boards and other associations, Presidents and Members of Union Boards and also to the cultivators of the Province for their hearty co-operation. A sowing calendar was also printed both in English and Bengali and was widely distributed throughout the Province so as to give the people an idea as to the time of sowing seeds of crops and vegetables, nature of soil on which a particular crop is to be grown, the seed rate per acre, outturn, time of harvesting, etc. A list of propaganda materials prepared and issued is enclosed herewith.

In addition to the above schemes, a sum of Rs.1,00,000 was sanctioned by the Revenue Department for the re-excavation of silted up tanks chiefly in Birbhum and Bankura districts and a sum of Rs.10 lakhs was issued as *takavi* loans chiefly for the purpose of growing more food crops during the year.

The Committee laid a very great stress on a most vigorous, continuous and intensive campaign to educate the people as fully as possible in the necessity of increased food-production in the Province and to advise them as to how this may be achieved. Importance of the uses of improved seeds, better implements, better cattle, etc., was accordingly brought home to the people and the preparation of "Compost" was specially advocated for the purpose. Cultivation of vegetables, fruits, fodder crops, etc., and improvement of fisheries, poultry and dairy were also included in the Campaign. The people were also asked not to keep an inch of cultivable land fallow. A Special Officer was appointed to prepare and supply suitable propaganda materials at proper intervals and to co-ordinate and consolidate the Campaign throughout the Province. All the modern methods of propaganda, e.g., posters, leaflets, slides, hoardings, gramophone records, etc., were adopted to educate the people in various directions. Several articles in simple Bengali were published in the press to strengthen the campaign and at the instance of the Special Officer a non-official fortnightly paper called "Khadya Utpadan" was started and sent out to the Subdivisional Officers for distribution for the countryside. A "Sowing calendar" both in English and Bengali was prepared and distributed on a large scale to educate the people in the cultivation of various food crops, including vegetables, fruits and also fodder crops.

1943-44.

In connection with the current year's campaign three lakh maunds of *aman* seeds are again being purchased and distributed and a sum of Rs.66½ lakhs has already been sanctioned for the purpose. It has been decided that for every maund of seed received, the loanee will be required to pay 1½ maunds of seeds or Rs.20 if repayment is made in cash (Rs.25 in some parts where the price is unusually high).

In order to popularise the growing of fodder crop in Bengal, 12,500 maunds of seeds of *kharif* fodder crops, *Jowar*, *Bajra* and cowpeas are being distributed on loan to be recovered in kind or in cash of the cost price of seed supplied at a total cost of Rs.1,25,000. Sanction has also been given for the distribution as loan recoverable after harvest at cost price of 42,000 maunds of gram, lentil and mustard seeds at an estimated cost of Rs.6,63,000. For increasing the area under wheat it is contemplated to distribute to the cultivators on loan 20,000 maunds of wheat seeds at a total cost of Rs.3,00,000 which will cover an area of 20,000 acres.

In order to provide irrigation facilities for the cultivation of wheat, sanction has been given for providing twenty Persian wheels in twenty selected centres in the Northern and Western Circles. These Persian wheels working on a rotational system would command an area of 50 acres and would thus help in bringing 1,000 acres under wheat cultivation at a total estimated recurring and non-recurring cost of Rs.80,000. Government have also authorised the Collectors of districts to spend up to Rs.10,000 each on small irrigation schemes which will immediately help to bring more land under cultivation or increase the production of the cultivable lands and can be completed before the rains. They have also been asked to come up for additional funds, if necessary, in this direction and it is estimated that work to the value of Rs.3 lakhs will be completed before the rains set in. The Irrigation Department are also seriously engaged on schemes of drainage and irrigation for execution in the next cold weather.

Last year's programme of propaganda in connection with "Grow More Food" campaign is being continued in the current year. Propaganda is also being made for growing more vegetable, as by taking up quick growing vegetables, it would be possible to reduce the demand for rice, stocks of which, have now become limited. A scheme for supply of seeds of country vegetables in and around Calcutta has been sanctioned by Government and an enlarged scheme in this respect for the whole municipal areas of this Province is under contemplation and it is proposed to be operated in the next cold weather. For supply of vegetables to the Defence Services a scheme for growing English vegetables in the Darjeeling district has been drawn up and is now being operated at the expense of the Central Government. Another scheme for growing of vegetables in the plains for supply to the Army has also been drawn up at an estimated cost of about Rs.2 lakhs and is under consideration. It is proposed to take up the scheme as Agents of the Government of India, if they are agreeable to such a course.

In a conference held recently at Dacca with the Hon'ble Minister for Agriculture as President, the question of organising the future "Grow More Food" schemes was considered as a result of which it is contemplated to take up schemes for reclamations of new lands during next year by granting loans to the landlords for the purpose.

In connection with the "Grow More Food" schemes Government have also sanctioned the entertainment of a disease control staff consisting of one

Mycologist, one Entomologist, three mycological assistants, three entomological assistants, etc., at a total estimated cost of Rs.68,000.

Government have also appointed an Agricultural Development Commissioner who will be assisted by a staff of experienced administrative officers. It is intended that he will relieve the expert officers of the Department of much of the administrative work entailed in the seed distribution and other schemes, thus enabling further schemes to be undertaken for which staff was not hitherto available; he will also supervise the collection and preparation of schemes for the extension of cultivation and of double cropping, and will assist in co-ordinating the work of the Agriculture Department with other Department.

List of Propaganda materials on "Grow More Food".

1. Appeal to cultivators.
2. Appeal to the Presidents and Members of Union Boards.
3. Appeal to landlords.
4. Appeal to M.L.As. and M.L.Cs.
5. Appeal to the Chairmen, District Boards and other Associations.
6. A note on organisation of propaganda.
7. Leaflets Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4.
8. Posters Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4.
9. Booklet on "Grow More Food" (English and Bengali).
10. A "*Tarja*" entitled "*Khabar Jogar Karo*".
11. Pamphlet on Compost.
12. Hoardings—11.
13. Slides—2.
14. Kiosks.
15. Sowing Calender (English and Bengali).
16. Leaflet on fighting crop fires.
17. Leaflet on the cultivation of suitable food and fodder crops around slit trenches.
18. Leaflet on *rabi* crops.
19. Designs for coloured posters (4) on *rabi* crops.
20. Design for kiosks.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Sir, may I rise on a point of order? According to the rule of practice obtaining in this House, questions and replies are supplied just half an hour before the House sits. Sir, it is physically impossible for any member to go through them before putting supplementary questions within that time——

Mr. PRESIDENT: What is your suggestion?

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: My suggestion, Sir, is that the procedure now obtaining should be changed and the questions and answers be made available to the members the previous evening in order to enable them to go through them carefully and prepare supplementary questions. Sir, supplementary questions often elicit very important information with regard

to the administration of the State, and it is a privilege and right of the House to put these questions after being properly prepared. I think much valuable time of the House is wasted if replies are given which are evasive.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am afraid that cannot be. This practice has been in vogue for a long time, and I do not think that it is necessary to change it now. Supplementary questions have always been put in the past, and I am sure the rules have been operating very satisfactorily. If any honourable member wants to put any supplementary question on any particular question, he is expected to study the answers only to that question and not all the questions.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: May I appeal to you, Sir, to see that the questions and answers are put on the table at least half an hour before the Council sits? Sometimes, they are distributed only five minutes before 2 o'clock. This gives us hardly any time to go through them.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I shall see that the questions are placed on the table half an hour before the House sits, but it is not possible to place them in the hands of the members the day before.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state by how many acres the areas under paddy and other food crops in Bengal have been extended by the operation of the special measures taken by the Government up till now?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: In Bengal we have not got any organisation for collection of statistics of acres. It is generally done more or less by guess. For last year we have not got any figures to say definitely that there has been any increase and this year we will try to get some definite figures for the next year.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Has there been any increase in the acreage of jute?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: Only in the licensed area jute is grown.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state since when the Grow More Food campaign is in operation in Bengal?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: Since last year.

Mr. HAMIDUL HUQ CHOWDHURY: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state whether there has been an increase in the cultivation of jute over the last year's licensed area?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: I could not say, but it is the general idea that there has been some increase in the cultivation of jute.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: My question is this—for which portion of Bengal has this Grow More Food campaign been adopted for the purpose of extending the area under paddy and other food crops?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: For Bengal as a whole; throughout Bengal, I mean.

Mr. HAMIDUL HUQ CHOWDHURY: Sir, in Chapter X, page 3 of today's printed answers, I find the following answer: Action taken..... standards of weight being a central subject enforcement of standards must await the bringing into force of the Government of India Standards of Weight Act which prescribes the standards..... Sir, may I know who will bring that Act into force in this province—the Central Government or the Provincial Government?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: It is a central subject, as far as I know.

Mr. HAMIDUL HUQ CHOWDHURY: I submit, Sir, it is wrong information and the answer has not been correctly given.

Mr. PRESIDENT: You cannot argue on an answer.

Mr. HAMIDUL HUQ CHOWDHURY: But that is a wrong answer that has been given by the Government——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Right or wrong, you have got to accept it; you cannot supply the answer.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Will the Hon'ble Minister please state if he is aware of the fact that there has been an increase in jute acreage on account of the lack of supplies of paddy seeds in time?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: Certainly not. All the licensed area has not been grown with jute.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Is it not a fact that the area under jute is much larger this year than last year?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: It may be larger this year, because it was decided to sow with jute ten annas land as compared with 8 annas last year. But even then the full licensed area of land has not been grown with jute this year.

Relief work in Midnapore.

5. Rai Sahib JOGENDRA NATH RAY: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Revenue Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) the total amount spent in cash and also in kind for relief work in the devastated parts of Midnapore and 24-Parganas up to this date;

(*b*) the total amount received from the public contributions from inside and outside India;

(*c*) names of all non-official organisations at work in those areas and the relief work done by each of them to mitigate the loss and damage caused to persons and properties;

(*d*) all the details of the relief measures already taken by the Government or about to be taken by them; and

(*e*) whether the Government consider that the phase of short-time relief is now over or about to be over?

MINISTER in charge of the REVENUE DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Mr. Tarak Nath Mukerjea): (*a*) A statement is laid on the Table.

(*b*) No public contributions were received by the Government.

(*c*) The following organisations have worked from time to time:—

24-Parganas.

(*i*) Jana Seva Mondali.
(*ii*) Ramkrishna Mission.
(*iii*) Brohma Samaj.
(*iv*) Vivekanando Mission.
(*v*) Hindu Mahasabha.
(*vi*) Marwari Relief Society.
(*vii*) Muslim Relief Committee.
(*viii*) Bengal Peoples' Cyclone Relief Fund.

Midnapore.

1. Ram Krishna Mission.
2. Hindu Mahasabha.
3. Bharat Sevasram Sangha.
4. Marwari Relief Society.
5. Friends Ambulance Units.
6. Medical Section of the B.C.P.C.
7. Nababidhan Relief Mission.
8. Bankura Medical Units.
9. Muslim Relief Society.
10. Hindu Mission.
11. Upper India Association.
12. Indian Medical Association.
13. Mayor's Relief Fund.
14. Midnapore Flood and Cyclone Relief Committee.
15. Peoples' Cyclone Relief Committee.
16. Aryya Samaj Relief Society.
17. Khadem-ul Insan Mission.
18. Pabna Satsang.
19. Hindu Muslim Unity Association.
20. Indian Christian Association.

(*d*) A statement is laid on the Table.

(*e*) Short term relief is not expected to be over earlier than the next harvest.

Statement referred to in reply to clause (a) of question No. 5.

District and subdivision.	Head of relief.	Expenditure up to 15-6-43. Rs.
Midnapore ..	1. Gratuitous relief—	
	(a) In cash—	
	Contai	13,57,035
	Tamluk	7,41,581
	Ghatal	..
	Jhargram	..
	Sadar South	800
	Sadar North	981
		21,00,397
	(b) In kind—	
	Contai	15,36,416
	Tamluk	25,70,666
	Ghatal	2,408
	Jhargram	..
	Sadar South	35,443
	Sadar North	5,938
		41,50,871
	2. Agricultural loan—	
	(a) Ordinary agricultural loans—	
	Contai	26,92,110
	Tamluk	19,57,090
	Ghatal	1,25,000
	Jhargram	61,000
	Sadar South	5,75,000
	Sadar North	2,94,154
		57,04,354
	(b) Loans to Jotedars and Talukdars—	
	Contai	35,785
	Tamluk	1,97,093
		2,32,878
	(c) Business loans—	
	Contai	53,960
	Tamluk	62,335
		1,16,295

District and subdivision.	Head of relief.		Expenditure up to 15-6-43 Rs.
	Test relief—		
	Contai	.. ..	32,45,920
	Tamluk	.. ..	19,84,376
	Jhargram	.. ..	61,800
	Sadar South	.. ..	3,39,745
			35,76,841
	Relief to weavers—		
	Contai	.. ..	12,000
	Tamluk	.. ..	30,000
			42,000
24-Parganas (Diamond Harbour).	1. Gratuitous relief—		
	(a) In cash	..	Rs.1,293
	(b) In kind—		
	(i) Rice	..	29,882 mds.
	(ii) Paddy	..	11,954 ,,
	(iii) Cloth	..	6,181 pairs.
	Frocks	..	104 dozen.
	Merjai	..	581 pieces.
	Hessian	..	10,000 yds.
	Barley	..	100 mds. + 500 tins.
	Sati	..	2 mds. + 23 tins.
	Sago	..	1 md. + 13 tins.
	2. Agricultural loans—		
	(a) Cash	..	Rs.4,60,000
	(b) Kind	..	8,491 mds. of paddy seed.
	3. Business loan	..	Rs.80,000
	4. Test relief—		
	Ordinary test relief	..	Rs.2,652
	Embankment repairs		Over Rs.3 lakhs

Statement referred to in clause (d) of question No. 5, showing the details of relief measures taken by Government in the districts of Midnapore and 24-Parganas.

1. Distribution of gratuitous relief—

(a) In cash, i.e., cash doles.

(*b*) In kind—

(*i*) Rice doles.

(*ii*) Free distribution of cloth, blankets, etc., and also of sago, barley, etc., for invalids and milk and food to babies.

(*iii*) Free distribution of house building materials.

(*iv*) Free supply of seeds.

2. Distribution of agricultural loans for—

(*i*) House building.

(*ii*) Agricultural operations.

(*iii*) Subsistence.

(*iv*) Purchase of milch and plough cattle.

3. Distribution of loans for rehabilitation of small trades and business.

4. Test relief works—

(*i*) Ordinary test works, e.g., construction of roads, re-excavation of *khals*, etc.

(*ii*) Repair of embankments.

5. Sinking of tube-wells and excavation and re-excavation of tanks.

6. Free supply of medicines and other medical relief.

7. Providing occupation and employment in Salt Manufacture.

8. Advancing the pay of the chowkidars and dafadars in the most distressed areas from provincial revenue pending remission of union rates in those areas.

Besides in the district of Midnapore the following special measures have been taken—

(1) Milk canteens have been opened for distribution of milk to infants, invalids and expectant mothers.

(2) Government have sanctioned Rs.57,000 for distribution as gratuitous relief to destitute weavers for repairs or replacement of their looms and a further sum of Rs.98,600 for supplying them with yarn on loan.

(3) Government have sanctioned Rs.6,79,000 for assisting the educational institutions severely damaged or destroyed.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: With reference to (*b*), was any public contribution called for by the Governor?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: No, Sir.

Mr. NARESH NATH MOOKERJEE: May I know why the Governor's fund has not been included in the list? I do not also find the Mayor's Fund included in this list.

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: These are not Government funds, and that is why Government is not aware as to how much has been collected by those Funds.

Mr. NARESH NATH MOOKERJEE: I think these two funds should be included in this list.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Mookerjee, you cannot go on arguing; you can only put a question.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Did not the Governor call for public contributions and then the public contributed to the Governor's Fund?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: We have not yet any information on the point.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Sir, my point is: whether the Governor's Fund is not a public Fund and whether the public did not contribute to the Governor's Fund?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Well, that would amount to an expression of opinion.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: My question is whether the Governor's Fund is a public fund.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Is the Hon'ble Minister aware as to what is the balance of the Governor's Fund?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: No.

Cyclone and flood in Diamond Harbour.

6. **Mr. RANAJIT PAL CHOWDHURY:** Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Revenue Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) whether any estimate has been made of the extent of loss of (1) human life, (2) cattle, (3) crops and (4) properties caused by the cyclone and flood havoc in the Diamond Harbour subdivision in October, 1942;

(*b*) if so, when it is expected to be published; and

(*c*) if not, the reason or reasons for which such an estimate has not been considered necessary?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: (*a*) Yes, so far as loss of human life, cattle, crops and huts is concerned. As to loss of other properties no reliable estimation is possible.

(*b*) It was made available to the Press as soon as the figures were compiled.

(*c*) Does not arise.

Price of yarn.

7. **Mr. NUR AHMED:** Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Commerce, Labour and Industries Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) whether it is a fact that the price of yarn per bale has shot up four or five times its pre-war price and that the hand-loom weavers have stopped work on account of high price of yarn; and

(*b*) if so, what measures have been adopted by Government of Bengal for the supply of cheap yarn to the Bengal weavers?

MINISTER in charge of the COMMERCE, LABOUR and INDUSTRIES DEPARTMENTS (the Hon'ble Mr. Khwaja Shahabuddin): (*a*) It is a fact that the price of yarn per bale has increased but I have no information that handloom weavers have stopped work for this reason.

(*b*) It is in contemplation to promulgate an order controlling the distribution of yarn to hand-loom weavers of the Province but as this is contingent on arrangement being made for the supply of yarn to the weavers at controlled rates, this Government are in communication with the Central Government to that end.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state when this communication was first made to the Central Government?

The Hon'ble Mr. Khwaja SHAHABUDDIN: I cannot give the exact date when this communication was made to the Government of India; but we are in communication with them.

Ban on "Desher Katha".

8. Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Home Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) If he is aware that a book entitled "Desher Katha" edited by the late Pandit Sakharam Ganesh Deushkar was proscribed by the Government of the Province and is still on the banned list; and

(*b*) if the answer to the above question be in the affirmative, whether the Government now propose to lift the ban; if so, when; if not, why not?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: (*a*) Yes.

(*b*) No, Government do not think it expedient to remove the ban during the pendency of war.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if he has gone through this book "Desher Katha"?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: Not fully.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Then how is it that Government says that it is not expedient to remove the ban?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: As far as I am aware, it was a ban put by the previous Government.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Then will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to make it his business to go through the book and reconsider whether it is not expedient to remove the ban?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: I do not think anything has taken place since to change the view taken by the previous Government.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: May I ask the Hon'ble Minister to go through the book fully and if he thinks fit to recommend removal of the ban imposed by the previous Government?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: Until the circumstances make it necessary to reconsider the decision which has been arrived at by the previous Government, I do not think there is any justification for the removal of the ban.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if he is in a position to contradict that the ban was placed on this book when the Montagu-Chelmsford Report came into operation?

(No answer.)

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if he is prepared to follow in this matter the policy adopted by the Government in 1914-15?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: I said "previous Government". I did not say "Government just before the present Government". As a matter of fact, from what I have seen of the book I am definitely of opinion that there is no justification for changing my views.

Taxi-cabs in Calcutta.

9. Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MAHALANOBIS: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Home Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) if the attention of Government has been drawn to the fact that since the settlement of the last general strike of taxi-cab drivers in Calcutta, it is getting increasingly difficult to engage taxi-cabs on hire in Calcutta at the rate shown by taxi meters, as the taxi-cab drivers refuse to ply at the meter rate and charge higher rates, sometimes double such rates or more before accepting engagements;

(*b*) if the answer to (*a*) be in the affirmative, will the Government be pleased to take immediate and effective steps to prevent this practice; and

(*c*) if the answer be in the negative, will the Government be pleased to institute immediate enquiries about the matter, and take steps to prevent such practice, if found to exist?

Mr. BIREN ROY, Parliamentary Secretary (on behalf of the Hon'ble Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin): (*a*) Yes.

(*b*) An order has been issued under the Defence of India Rules imposing a surcharge of eight annas per trip over the meter reading. Strict supervision is at the same time being exercised to prevent the taxi-drivers from charging extravagant fares.

(*c*) Does not arise.

Mr. NARESH NATH MOOKERJEE: May I know what is the strict supervision exercised and what is the remedy for a lay man against a taxi-driver who insists on extorting double fees from his customer?

Mr. BIREN ROY: He can immediately take the taxi-driver to the nearby police-station.

Mr. HAMIDUL HUQ CHOWDHURY: What is the remedy in case he does not get relief at the police-station? We know that in some cases complaints were made at the police-station but no action was taken by the police.

Mr. BIREN ROY: We have reports that in cases that were reported to the police steps were taken.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Sir, may I rise on a point of order?

Mr. PRESIDENT: What is your point of order?

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: My point, Sir, is that this question was put to the Hon'ble Sir Nazimuddin who is present here and in his presence my honourable friend the Parliamentary Secretary is replying to the question. In terms of the Standing Order it is the Minister in charge of the Department to whom the question relates, or *in his absence* any other Minister with the consent of the President, who should give the answer to the question. With regard to the supplementary questions, my point is that they are very important because very important information is elicited by them. So these Parliamentary Secretaries who have no access to the files should not answer the supplementary questions——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. Mr. Mazumdar, you must confine yourself to the point of order strictly.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Sir, my point is that in the presence of the Hon'ble Home Minister who is in charge of the question, his Parliamentary Secretary cannot reply.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Hon'ble Minister can authorize their colleagues or their Parliamentary Secretaries to reply to the questions. In the present case, even though the Hon'ble Home Minister is physically present, I assume he is not mentally present. (Laughter.)

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: On a point of order, Sir. Only when any Hon'ble Minister is absent, then some other Hon'ble Ministers should reply on his behalf. This will be in accordance with the rules. But is it not necessary that these rules are to be first amended or extended before Parliamentary Secretaries can be allowed to reply? What I would submit to you, Sir, is this that so long as the rules stand, the Hon'ble Ministers to whom the questions may be put or in their absence some other Hon'ble Ministers should reply to them and not their Parliamentary Secretaries.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Das, I draw your attention to the definition of the word "Minister". The word "Minister" means a member of the Council of Ministers and includes any member to whom such Minister may delegate any function assigned to him under the rules.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Sir, with regard to my point of order, I am not concerned with the definition of the word "Minister". There is a distinct direction in the order that in the presence of the Minister in charge no other Minister or member of the House can reply. I want a ruling on this point whether in the presence of the Minister in charge, a Secretary or a delegate can reply unless this order is changed.

Mr. PRESIDENT: A Parliamentary Secretary can answer questions, otherwise the appointment of Parliamentary Secretaries is useless.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Sir, here the Hon'ble Minister is present and not absent. Therefore, our point is whether the Parliamentary Secretary can reply on behalf of the Minister when he is present before the rules are amended or extended. We quite realise that a new situation has arisen with the advent of the Parliamentary Secretaries and that certain functions must be allotted to them. But our point is this that these rules still govern us and so before these rules are amended or extended we want to know whether the Parliamentary Secretary can reply.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Parliamentary Secretaries can always do so. If an Hon'ble Minister chooses not to answer a question himself and delegates the duty to one of his colleagues or to his Parliamentary Secretary to answer such a question, he can do so under the rules.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Sir, as the custodian of the rights of this House, when a Minister is present and chooses not to reply to a question, is it not your prerogative to compel the Hon'ble Minister to reply?

Mr. PRESIDENT: I do not think so. Whether the answering is done by the Minister or by one of his colleagues or by his Parliamentary Secretary, it is immaterial. The rules authorise him to do so himself or by delegating the power to someone else.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: May we have your ruling on this point, Sir?

Mr. PRESIDENT: I have disposed of this point of order already.

Mr. NARESH NATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, my point has not been answered clearly. May I ask the Parliamentary Secretary as to what machinery is there to check this evil of the taxi-drivers charging more than the usual rate?

Mr. BIREN ROY: Specific instances should be brought to the notice of the police. When complaints are made they should be registered and action will be taken on them.

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Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: On this last reply may I ask for a ruling from the Chair as to whether this statement from the Parliamentary Secretary can be used as evidence if any case comes to the Court? The point is this: according to the recent ruling of the High Court at Calcutta so far as Ministers' statements are concerned, they can be referred to as pieces of evidence——

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am afraid, Mr. Das, that is not a point of order.

Rai Bahadur KESHAB CHANDRA BANERJEE: Sir, arising out of (*b*), will the Hon'ble Minister please see that the order issued by Government is prominently displayed on the car itself somewhere near the taxi-meter so that a passenger may not have any difficulty in understanding what the order is?

Mr. BIREN ROY: A communiqué was issued in the papers to this effect——

Rai Bahadur KESHAB CHANDRA BANERJEE: My point is whether it can be arranged that the order referred to in (*b*) should be prominently displayed somewhere near the taxi-meter.

Mr. BIREN ROY: That is not considered expedient at the present moment.

Mr. HAMIDUL HUQ CHOWDHURY: Will the Hon'ble Home Minister take action so that the Commissioner of Police may give directions to the constables on duty to take action as soon as any complaint is made to them? It would be much more convenient to a passenger if the traffic police or a constable nearabout could take cognisance of the complaint than for him to go to a police-station.

Mr. BIREN ROY: We have authorised the constables already to take notice of such complaints.

Mr. HAMIDUL HUQ CHOWDHURY: Is the Home Minister aware that proper relief is not being obtained by the public who use these taxi-cabs?

Mr. BIREN ROY: Well, as far as I know, relief has been obtained in several cases. Several taxi-drivers were fined and in some cases their licenses were withdrawn.

Mr. NARESH NATH MOOKERJEE: Is the Hon'ble Minister aware that advance payments are sometimes taken by taxi-drivers before they agree to ply? In such cases what is the remedy?

Mr. BIREN ROY: The only remedy that I can suggest is to go to a police-station and record a complaint.

Rai Bahadur KESHAB CHANDRA BANERJEE: With reference to (*b*), again, will the Hon'ble Minister please state whether this order has been given wide publicity among the public?

Mr. BIREN ROY: As I have already said, a communiqué was issued in the papers.

Burma evacuees.

10. Khan Sahib ABDUL AZIZ: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Home Department be pleased to state if it is a fact that relief to Burma evacuees of Chittagong and Noakhali has been stopped now? If so, why?

(*b*) Is he aware that the evacuees in question would be greatly inconvenienced by this sudden stoppage of relief?

(*c*) Do the Government propose to continue the relief measures for their benefit as before? If not, why not?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: The honourable member is referred to the answer given in this House on the 14th July, 1943, to Short Notice question No. 51A.

Burma Evacuees.

11. Mr. NUR AHMED: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Home Department be pleased to state if it is a fact that the relief given to the Burma evacuees of Chittagong and Noakhali by the Government of Bengal has been stopped all on a sudden?

(*b*) Is it a fact that a sudden stopping in the relief has caused and is causing great hardships and suffering to the Burma evacuees of Chittagong and Noakhali?

(*c*) If so, do the Government propose to continue relief as before? If not, why not?

(*d*) What other measures, if any, the Government of Bengal propose to take in order to give relief to the Burma evacuees of Chittagong and Noakhali?

(*e*) Is it a fact that many thousands of the evacuees of these two districts have not received any relief from the fund allotted for this purpose?

(*f*) Is it a fact that many thousands of claim petitions from these evacuees are still lying undisposed of in Chittagong?

(*g*) If so, do the Government propose to make proper arrangement for giving relief and to dispose of these claim petitions without further delay? If not, why not?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: The honourable member is referred to the answer given in this House on the 14th July, 1943, to Short Notice question No. 51A.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if in this matter of relief the concession formerly given to the students are being continued?

Mr. BIREN ROY: That question has already been answered by the Hon'ble Chief Minister.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: On a point of order, Sir. The honourable member who is now attempting to give answer to my question on behalf of the Chief Minister apparently does not know what was the answer of the Hon'ble Chief Minister. I have asked, Sir, a definite question and he should give a reply to it——

Mr. BIREN ROY: I ask for notice.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Sir, as we have submitted before, it is found in many cases that it is not possible for the Parliamentary Secretary to give an answer properly to a question to which the Hon'ble Chief Minister could give a proper reply if he were present; in such cases if the Parliamentary Secretary attempts to give a reply and fails, it means depriving the House of a valued privilege of getting proper replies to questions, because when the Parliamentary Secretary fails in his attempt to give a proper answer, naturally he is forced to ask for notice of questions of which notices were perhaps given two or three months ago. This particular question cropped up in connection with a short-notice question which was answered: if the Parliamentary Secretary had given attention to that question, this difficulty would not have arisen. At that time, you will remember, Sir, that he was unable to give a proper answer to supplementary questions and consequently that question was held over to enable the Hon'ble Chief Minister to give a proper reply. So, Sir, this difficulty is created, as pointed out by my friend Mr. Mazumdar, if the Parliamentary Secretary answers the questions, especially when the Hon'ble Chief Minister is present.

Mr. PRESIDENT: You must realise that the change of rules will not alter the situation because when the Hon'ble Minister delegates his right of reply to questions to the Parliamentary Secretary, the Parliamentary Secretary takes full responsibility and whatever reply he gives he gives it on behalf of the Minister.

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: Sir, the supplementary question of Mr. Humayun Kabir is not a part of either question 10 or 11: there is nowhere mentioned in these questions anything about the relief to the students; so the proper answer to this question is to ask for notice and that is what has been asked.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Sir, I would refer you to short-notice question No. 51A in which that matter was raised at that time. When the answer to short-notice question No. 51A was given, this matter was raised and I thought that if the Hon'ble Chief Minister himself had replied he could have thrown some information on the subject especially when this afternoon he has just informed the House that Government have given orders to resume giving relief which was withheld previously. It was because that relief was withheld that an adjournment motion was tabled but according to your advice it was withdrawn in favour of a short-notice question regarding the relief to be given to the evacuees and the question of relief to students was a part of that relief.

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: Well, I can say this that I have got no information about this matter and if I had to answer it I also would have asked for notice.

Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act.

12. Khan Sahib ABDUL AZIZ: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Education Department be pleased to state whether a comprehensive Bill has been prepared in order to improve the existing Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act of 1930?

(*b*) If so, when will this amending Bill be introduced in the Bengal

(*c*) Do the Government propose to make primary education free and compulsory in those districts where education cess is being levied? If not, why not?

MINISTER in charge of the EDUCATION DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Mr. Tamizuddin Khan): (*a*) No.

(*b*) Does not arise.

(*c*) Cess provides insufficient funds for free and compulsory primary education. The problem is at present being investigated.

Khan Sahib NURUL AMIN: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state since when this investigation has been started and how long it will take to finish the investigation?

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN: The investigation was started a few months ago and it is expected to be finished very soon.

Khan Sahib NURUL AMIN: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to give us an idea of the time? "Very soon" is rather a vague expression.

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN: I think within the current financial year.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: What is the problem that is being investigated?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Das, you should put your supplementary questions in proper form.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Arising out of answer (*c*), will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state what is the problem he refers to that is being investigated?

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN: Please refer to question (*c*).

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: I have gone through question (*c*).

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Das, I must remind you again that you should put your question in proper form if you want an answer to your question from the Hon'ble Minister.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state whether the problem is to make education free and compulsory in the districts?

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN: Evidently, that is the problem.

Mr. KADER BAKSH: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state whether he proposes to keep in abeyance the realisation of education cess pending the investigation of the problem?

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN: No, Sir.

Health of students.

13. Mr. NUR AHMED: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Education Department be pleased to state what measures have been adopted and are being adopted to improve the health of the students of all classes in Bengal?

(*b*) In how many schools and colleges in Bengal has the system of midday tiffin for students been introduced up to this date?

(*c*) What was the amount spent from the provincial revenues for midday tiffin of students in Bengal during the years 1940-41 and 1941-42 respectively?

(*d*) Do the Government propose to take steps for introducing this system of tiffin in all schools and colleges in Bengal? If not, why not?

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN: (*a*)(*i*) Trained teachers are employed for physical education in High Schools, High Madrasahs, Middle Schools and Primary Schools.

(*ii*) The poorer students of high schools and high madrasahs are supplied with tiffin free of cost.

(*iii*) Grants are sanctioned to schools and madrasahs for the purchase of apparatus for physical exercises and for improvement of playgrounds.

(*b*) The information is not readily available.

(*c*) Rs.45,000 in both years.

(*d*) Yes, if funds permit.

Mr. SULTANUDDIN AHMED: Will the Government be pleased to state what is the number of those poor students who are supplied with tiffin free of cost?

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN: I cannot give the number. For that I ask for notice.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to give us an idea as to the contents of this tiffin? What does the tiffin consist of, and what are its constituents?

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Hon'ble Minister will please answer the question.

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN: I don't think an answer is intended.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state what money Government have spent on this tiffin? What are the things that are purchased by the money provided?

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN: Government have spent Rs. 45,000 during the years 1940-41 and 1941-42. So far as the acutal articles purchased are concerned, it depends on the particular locality concerned. The same things are not provided everywhere. For instance, in Chittagong nowadays *chura* is being given in place of *luchi* which was given previously. Therefore, it is not uniform.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Arising out of (*c*), will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to make it clear whether Rs. 45,000 was spent in two years or Rs. 45,000 is spent every year? It is not clear from the reply.

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN: In two years.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to tell us how much was spent per student per month?

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN: I want notice.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if it is proposed to extend the facilities whatever their cost to the students of the middle English schools and to primary schools as well?

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN: Just now we are not thinking of that.

Special training for second language teachers.

14. Mr. NUR AHMED: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Education Department be pleased to state whether arrangements have been made for special training of second language teachers, i.e., Arabic or Persian teachers, serving in schools and colleges of Bengal? If so, what are they? If not, why not?

(*b*) Is the Hon'ble Minister aware that the Government of the Punjab have made special arrangements for training of those teachers?

(*c*) If so, do the Government propose to make similar arrangements in Bengal with such modifications as they think best? If not, why not?

(*d*) What facilities have been provided by the Government of Bengal for the training of the teachers for madrasahs, both of old and new scheme; now existing in Bengal? If not, why not?

(*e*) Is it a fact that there is great dearth of trained teachers in Bengal madrasahs?

(*f*) If so, what measures do Government propose to take for the training of such teachers in training schools? If not, why not?

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN: (*a*) It has not been possible to make any arrangements on account of the war.

(*b*) I have no information.

(*c*) Does not arise.

(*d*) English teachers of reformed madrasahs are normally required to possess the B. T. Degree. During the war it is not possible to make arrangements for the training of teachers of old scheme madrasahs. The question requires thorough investigation.

(*e*) There is a lack of such teachers.

(*f*) The question will be taken up after the war is over.

Financial aid to Educational Institutions of Calcutta.

15. Mr. HARIDAS MAJUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Education Department be pleased to state if the Government propose to grant the educational institutions of Calcutta further monetary help in the near future? If not, why not?

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN Khan: No. Funds are not available.

Land under paddy.

16. Mr. NUR AHMED: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Agriculture Department be pleased to state what were the total areas of land under paddy cultivation in Bengal in the years 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941 and 1942 respectively and what is the total acreage of land in which paddy has been sown so far in the year 1943?

(*b*) What was the percentage of increase or decrease in acreage of paddy land during these years and what is the amount of increased acreage of land under paddy in the current year?

(*c*) What measures have been adopted and are being taken by the Government in furtherance of the "Grow More Food" campaign?

(*d*) How much land has been reclaimed and newly brought under paddy cultivation in Bengal as a result of the "Grow More Food" campaign?

(*e*) What is the approximate increase in paddy and other food crops as a result of the "Grow More Food" campaign?

(*f*) What is the total expenditure that would be required to finance the "Grow More Food" schemes in Bengal, and how much of this expenditure would be met by the Government of India and how much would be borne by the Government of Bengal?

(*g*) Do the Government propose to pay subsidy to the cultivators and *jotedars* in order to encourage them to bring waste lands under paddy cultivation and to obtain increased yield of paddy crops per acre of land as is being done in the Punjab and other Provinces?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: (*a*) The acreage figures for the years 1938 to 1942 are given below—

Year.	Acreage.
1938 ...	21,988,000
1939 ...	22,255,100
1940 ...	20,770,300
1941 ...	23,843,000
1942 ...	23,293,900

The figures for 1943 are not yet available.

(*b*) Percentage of increase or decrease as compared with the figure for 1942 is given below—

	Increase(+) Decrease(−)
1938 ...	−5·94
1939 ...	−4·67
1940 ...	−12·15
1941 ...	+2·36

(*c*) The following measures have been taken or sanctioned under the "Grow More Food" campaign:—

(1) distribution of seed loans of *aman*, *aus*, gram, lentil, mustard, fodder crops,

(2) grant of *takavi* loans,

(3) improvement of irrigation facilities by initiating new irrigation schemes and by installation of Persian wheels, and

(4) propaganda including the organisation of a Manure Week.

(*d*) Exact information is not available but it is believed that there has been a considerable extension of cultivation as a result of "Grow More Food" campaign.

(*e*) The year 1942 in which the "Grow More Food" campaign was first started was exceedingly a bad one for *aus* and *aman* crop; but despite this, the area shows little decrease from the previous year which was an abnormally good one. The *rabi* food crops showed increase.

(*f*) The present estimate of expenditure during 1943 is about 93 lakhs. The Government of India are giving substantial grants towards "Grow More Food" schemes; but it is not possible as yet to say how much of this expenditure will be met by the Government of India as the matter is under consideration.

(*g*) No; the cultivators are given *takavi* loans.

Rai Bahadur KESHAB CHANDRA BANERJEE: With reference to (*d*), will the Hon'ble Minister please state what is the basis of this belief of his since no definite information is available?

The Hon'ble Khan SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: The reports of local officers

Dr. KUMUD SANKAR RAY: What is the amount of money that has been already spent by Government on this Grow More Food campaign during the current year and the year before?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: It is not possible to say without notice.

Mr. HAMIDUL HUQ CHOWDHURY: What is the source of the figures almost up to hundreds as regards the acreage of cultivation in Bengal?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: These figures are collected by the Director of Agriculture on the reports of District Agricultural Officers which are also verified and compared with reports received from the District Magistrates and Collectors. That is how these figures are compiled.

Mr. HAMIDUL HUQ CHOWDHURY: Are they based on enumeration or mere guess work?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: It is more or less guess work. The original basis, however, was the settlement record of rights but year to year they have been decreased or added to according to the climatic condition.

Regulation of Markets.

17. Mr. NUR AHMED: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Agriculture Department be pleased to state what measures have been taken and are intended to be taken for the regulation of markets in Bengal?

(*b*) Is it a fact that many illegal dues are being realised by the owners of most of the markets in Bengal from the sellers and stall-holders?

(*c*) Is it a fact that the last coalition Government introduced a Bill under the caption "the Bengal Markets Regulation Bill, 1941" and that the said Bill was passed by the Bengal Legislative Assembly and was sent to this House?

(*d*) Is it a fact that a Bill entitled "the Bengal Markets Regulation Bill, 1941" sent up from the other House was referred to a Select Committee in this House and the Select Committee's report was duly presented to this House?

(*e*) If so, do the Government propose to continue and proceed with the said Bill? If not, why not?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: (*a*) The Government had introduced a Bill known as "the Bengal Markets Regulation Bill, 1941" for the purpose.

(*b*) Government are aware that some charges are of doubtful legality, but they are being realised from a very long time.

(*c*) The answer is in the affirmative.

(*d*) The answer to the first part is in the affirmative. The report of the Select Committee was presented to the House, on the 11th December, 1941.

(e) The Bill introduced in 1941 has lapsed. Government has been seriously considering the points raised in the minutes of dissent submitted by several members of the Select Committee and is trying to reintroduce a revised Bill in the near future.

Distribution of paddy seeds in Contai.

18. Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA MUKHERJI: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Agriculture Department be pleased to state if in the Contai subdivision of the Midnapore district sufficient paddy seeds have been distributed for cultivation?

(*b*) Will the Government be pleased to direct agricultural officers in the Contai subdivision to see that the entire area that can be cultivated with paddy be so cultivated and sufficient paddy and cattle are provided for the purpose?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: (*a*) Yes.

(*b*) A whole-time Agricultural Officer has been appointed to work in the subdivision in conjunction with the officers of the Revenue Department. He is being assisted by other Agricultural Officers whenever required and I have reason to believe that the major portion of the cultivable area in the subdivision will be brought under paddy this year.

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA MUKHERJI: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if he is aware that a large area in the Contai subdivision is lying fallow and will he consider the desirability of providing *rabi* seeds for sowing a large area in that subdivision that was affected by the flood?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: We have already formulated a scheme for the distribution of seeds on an extensive scale in the flooded areas.

The Bengal Pasture Bill.

19. Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA MUKHERJEE: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Agriculture Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) if the Bengal Pasture Bill, referred to the Select Committee during the last session of the Bengal Council, has been considered by the Select Committee;

(*b*) what steps have been taken to fill up the places now vacant in the Select Committee due to the retirement of certain members; and

(*c*) if the sitting of the Select Committee will be expedited and the Bill brought before the Council for discussion at an early date?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: An official Bill is being drawn up on more comprehensive lines for introduction in the Legislature shortly and it is not therefore proposed to proceed with the previous Pasture Bill.

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA MUKHERJI: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state the time that will be taken in preparing the official Bill?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: We hope to introduce it in the next session of the Council.

Recommendations of the Land Revenue Commission.

20. Mr. NUR AHMED: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Revenue Department be pleased to state what steps have been taken by the Government of Bengal to give effect to the recommendations of the Land Revenue Commission as contained in their recommendation Nos. 34, 35 and 42 to 50 of the "Main conclusions and recommendations of their report, Volume I, published in 1940"?

(*b*) Do the Government propose to introduce any Bill to give effect to the recommendations in question? If not, why not?

(*c*) Have the Government accepted any recommendations of the Land Revenue Commission in question? If so, what are those recommendations?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: (*a*) and (*b*) Under consideration of Government.

(*c*) The honourable member is referred to the statement made by the then Hon'ble Minister, Revenue, on the subject on the floor of the Assembly on the 15th March, 1943.

Abolition of the Permanent Settlement.

21. Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MAHALANOBIS: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Revenue Department be pleased to state whether Government propose to postpone further consideration and action with regard to the scheme for abolition of the Permanent Settlement in Bengal during the continuance of the present war?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: The honourable member is referred to the statement made by the then Hon'ble Minister, Revenue, on the subject on the floor of the Assembly on 15th March, 1943.

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHALANABISH: On a point of order, Sir. When a question is put by an honourable member in this House, is it permissible to refer to an answer given by another Minister some time before in another place?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Usually it should not be done: but it has been the practice to do so. I think that in answering questions the Hon'ble Ministers should not refer to statements made elsewhere.

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: May I ask whether a printed report of the proceedings elsewhere is not a public thing to which reference could be made? It becomes an official document and as such whether reference might be made to it as to any printed document?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Reference can be made to an official document; but when a question is put, it is the privilege of the House to get a reply from the Hon'ble Minister directly and merely by referring to statements elsewhere the question is not properly answered.

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHALANABISH: Then, Sir, I submit that my question has not been answered, and that proper answer should be given to it.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state whether the policy enunciated in the statement made by the then Hon'ble Revenue Minister in regard to this subject has changed?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: Sir, this is a question of policy which relates to the Government as a whole.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state whether the present Government was in power on the 15th March, 1943?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: No, Sir.

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHALANOBISH: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state whether my question will be answered next day?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: In answer to that question I can read the statement.

Mr. HAMIDUL HUQ CHOWDHURY: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state whether Government propose to postpone further consideration and action with regard to the scheme for abolition of the Permanent Settlement. When a similar question was put to the previous Government, the previous Ministry gave an answer which is embodied in the statement, dated 15th March, 1943. Now, will the Hon'ble the Revenue Minister tell us whether the same answer holds good so far as the present Ministry is concerned?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: The matter is under consideration by the present Government.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state whether this answer is not likely to mislead the public as regards the policy of the present Government, as the answer which is now being given was prepared by the previous Government which is no longer in power? Because, for obvious reason, when the Hon'ble Minister refers to the statement made by the previous Government, it will convey an impression that the policy adumbrated by the previous Government is also the policy of the present Government.

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: As I have already stated, the matter is under consideration.

KESHAB CHANDRA BANERJEE: On a point of privilege, Sir. The members of this House have the right to enquire of

the policy of the present Government with regard to the Land Revenue Commission Report and not the decision arrived at by the previous Government. The question put by Mr. Abul Quasem was whether the present Government have accepted the policy laid down by the previous Ministry. The answer is that the matter is still under the consideration of Government. Therefore, how could a Bill for the imposition of tax on agricultural income be introduced in view of this statement

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: Government has introduced this Bill because that particular item has been considered by the present Government.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Well, you can take that point when the statement is laid before the House and is under discussion.

Non-Agricultural Tenancy Bill.

22. Khan Sahib ABDUL AZIZ: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Revenue Department be pleased to state if it is a fact that a comprehensive Non-Agricultural Tenancy Bill was framed and published in the *Calcutta Gazette* by the Government of Bengal?

(*b*) If so, do the Government propose to proceed with the said Bill?

(*c*) On what date shall the present Bengal Non-Agricultural Tenancy (Temporary Provisions) Act, 1940, expire?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: (*a*) Yes.

(*b*) The provisions of the Bill are under fresh examination. Government propose to introduce a Bill as soon as possible.

(*c*) On the 29th May, 1944.

Tube-wells in Calcutta.

23. Khan Sahib NURUL AMIN: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Public Health and Local Self-Government Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) the number of tube-wells sunk in Calcutta under the supervision of the Chief Engineer, Public Health Department, as A.R.P. measure in 1941;

(*b*) the number of contracts for such tube-wells given to Muslim and Hindu contractors (to be shown separately);

(*c*) the number of contracts for tube-wells distributed this year amongst Hindu and Muslim contractors respectively;

(*d*) whether the Government consider the desirability of giving 50 per cent. of such contracts to Muslim contractors; and

(*e*) if the answer to part (*d*) be in the affirmative, whether the Government propose to issue a circular to that effect?

MINISTER in charge of the PUBLIC HEALTH and LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi Jalaluddin Ahmad): (*a*) 2,496.

(*b*) Hindus	...	9
Muslims	...	2
Sikh	...	1
(*c*) Hindus	...	6
Muslim	...	1

(*d*) No.

(*e*) Does not arise.

Adjournment motions.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Questions are over now. I will now take up adjournment motions. Mr. Lalit Chandra Das.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Sir, my adjournment motion is to the following effect:—That this Council do adjourn its business to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the very serious situation which has arisen out of the present food crisis resulting in deaths from starvation of many persons in several parts of the city of Calcutta and in the districts of Bengal, Government having failed to adopt adequate measures to meet it.

Mr. PRESIDENT: May I make a suggestion? There is an item on today's agenda that the Hon'ble Civil Supplies Minister will make a statement on the food situation. My suggestion is that you first listen to that statement and if after that you still feel inclined to press your adjournment motion, you may do so. I on my part will waive the question of urgency.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Very well, Sir. I accept your suggestion.

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: Apart from that, is there not going to be a discussion on my statement? If so, then how does this adjournment motion arise at all?

The Hon'ble Mr. TULSI CHANDRA GOSWAMI: Sir, I rise to present——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. There are other adjournment motions also.

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: But then no member has risen to move them. So they do not arise.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am afraid Sir Nazimuddin has misunderstood the position. Adjournment motions are at present being considered, and the first motion on the agenda was moved by Mr. Lalit Chandra Das and at my suggestion he agreed to defer it until the Minister for Civil Supplies

had made his statement. I must give other honourable members who have given notice of adjournment motions chance to move them if they want to do so. Then, again, till I call upon the Hon'ble the Finance Minister to make his budget statement, he cannot do so, and I have not yet done so. Mr. Shrish Chandra Chakraverti.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: I beg to move that this Council do adjourn its business to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the failure of the Bengal Government to set at liberty persons purported to have been detained under Rule 26 of the Defence of India Rules, in spite of the decision of the Calcutta High Court and the recent decision of the Federal Court of India declaring the procedure adopted by the Bengal Government regarding detention as contrary to law and improper.

Mr. PRESIDENT: What are your points in support of your motion?

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: This is a matter of definite public importance as so many persons have been deprived of civil liberty in spite of the declaration of the High Court of Calcutta and the Federal Court of India that Rule 26 is illegal.

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: Sir, I submit that this matter is *sub judice* as we are going to file an appeal to the Privy Council against the decision of the Federal Court. I maintain that the principle of *sub judice* means that nothing should be done about a case which is coming up before a court to prejudice the court beforehand. In this particular case, it is fairly certain that the matter will come up before the Privy Council. In my opinion, a matter becomes *sub judice* not only when a thing is actually before the court, but even when there is every likelihood of the case coming up before the court.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: May I reply to the Hon'ble Chief Minister, Sir?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Yes.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Sir, the Hon'ble Chief Minister has said that the case is *sub judice*. May we know whether an appeal has been filed before the Privy Council? If it is not, mere intention that it will come up before a court does not make the case *sub judice*: the court must be in full seisin of the case before it can be said that the case is *sub judice*. The Government may change its mind tomorrow: so unless and until a case is actually before the court, it is not *sub judice*.

Mr. KRISHNA CHANDRA ROY CHOWDHURY: May I know, Sir, whether the honourable mover of the resolution thinks that the release of political prisoners is more important than the question of hundreds of deaths from starvation in the streets of Calcutta?

Mr. PRESIDENT: That is quite beside the point.

Mr. KADER BAKSH: I think, Sir, that the honourable mover of the resolution should explain how it is a matter of urgent public importance.

Nothing has been said about it: let him explain the position and let us understand it. The question whether it is *sub judice* or not will come hereafter.

Dr. KUMUD SANKAR RAY: Sir, will it make it a matter of public importance if Mr. Kader Baksh had been in prison? Probably not.

Mr. KADER BAKSH: We would like Mr. Shrish Chandra Chakraverti to explain how it is a matter of public importance.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Sir, I may reply to my friend Mr. Kader Baksh by saying that illegal detention makes it a matter of urgent public importance. These persons have been deprived of their liberty illegally. The High Court and the Federal Court have decided that they should be set free and in spite of that they have been kept under detention. This position makes it a matter of urgent public importance.

Mr. PRESIDENT: May I ask Sir Nazimuddin if these persons have been released or they are still in prison?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: The Federal Court decided only 8 cases; but these persons have since been detained under Regulation III of 1818.

Mr. KADER BAKSH: Sir, with regard to the question of *sub judice*, I have not quite followed Sir Nazimuddin. A matter becomes *sub judice* only when it is pending before a Court of Law. I only want to know whether this matter is pending before a Court of Law. There may be an intention on the part of Government to carry an appeal before the Privy Council, but unless and until that intention is translated into action, Government cannot give it the colour of *sub judice*. Unless the question is pending before a Court of Law, how can it be a matter of *sub judice*? I only want to know this. My intelligence and knowledge is limited and so I would request the Hon'ble the Home Minister to explain how the case is *sub judice*.

Mr. HAMIDUL HUQ CHOWDHURY: On a previous occasion the Hon'ble the President gave a ruling on a similar question but it was a more difficult point than this one, namely, the Kishoregunge case. There was an adjournment motion moved in this House on a certain shooting in the subdivision of Kishoregunge. The then Home Minister sought to stop the debate on the ground of the matter being *sub judice*. He said that it was *sub judice* because a complaint had been entertained by the police and the police was going to send the case up to the Court. As there was a chance of the case going to the Court, therefore he wanted it to be treated as *sub judice*. A statement was made that the police had already taken cognizance of the case and they were going to send it to the Court. Therefore, it was declared *sub judice* and no debate was allowed. The principle is that there should be no debate in the Legislature on a case which is to be tried by a Court of Law thereby prejudicing the litigants before the Court. Therefore, if this debate is allowed, it will prejudice the parties in the eye of the Court. I therefore, submit, Sir, that on principle it will

be violating the very thing against which this provision has been inserted in the Council Procedure Rules, namely, that no debate should take place on a case which is to be tried by a Court of Law. This case is going to be tried by a Court of Law, so it must be held to be *sub judice*.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Sir, my friend Mr. Hamidul Huq Chowdhury has referred to the Kishoregunge case. Now, so far as I remember and I think I am not mistaken, the then Home Minister was heckled and he definitely made a statement that the case was in actual *seisin* of the Court. As a matter of fact, a suit had been actually filed in the Court. Therefore, the Kishoregunge case does not apply here. Now, Sir, in arguing the latter portion whether the case is *sub judice* or not, I say that mere intention on the part of any party to file an appeal to a higher Court does not make the case *sub judice*. I, therefore, submit that the motion is in order.

Mr. KAMINI KUMAR DUTTA: Mr. President, Sir, we are engaged in discussing what is the legal connotation of the expression *sub judice*. We may agree or differ as to the correct interpretation; but nowhere in the rules do I find this expression. The rule to which reference has been made is apparently rule 89 (*c*). The provision there is quite definite and clear, namely, that the House shall not refer to any matter which is under adjudication by a court of law. So, Sir, as to what *sub judice* means, whether a contemplated proceeding can be styled *sub judice* or not, we need not travel into that domain at all. So far as the rule of this Chamber is concerned, it is quite definite and that is that it shall not refer to any matter which is under adjudication by a court of law. It is quite definite and there is no uncertainty about it. So it is quite clear that so far as the interregnum period is concerned, when a matter has been adjudicated by a court and when there is a chance of further adjudication of the matter by another court, only for that interregnum period no provision has been laid down under the rules. We are to be governed by the rules of this House and the general principle underlying all rules and laws is that where a rule or a law fetters the freedom of the public in any way, it should be construed very strictly. It should not be interpreted in any way which would fetter the liberty or rights of the members. Therefore, I consider that it is the right of this House to discuss the matter. Sir, I hear voice from an honourable member as to how the fettering of liberty comes in. Sir, one cannot feel what loss of liberty means unless one is behind the prison bar. I only wish my friend had tasted a little of that life in order to understand what loss of liberty means. Sir, as I have said, the rule is quite clear, namely, that it shall not refer to any matter which is under adjudication by a court of law. The Hon'ble the Home Minister has stated that at present there is no proceeding before any court and so it cannot be treated as a matter which is under adjudication by a court of law. Sir, a reference has been made to a previous occasion when a similar matter was taken cognizance of by the police and as such the point was raised whether it was a matter which was under adjudication by a court of law. Without referring to what had actually happened at the time, I

may say that it is the established law that when the police take cognizance of a case—and the police can take cognizance only of cognizable offences—they must immediately submit a report to the District Magistrate and the District Magistrate takes immediate cognizance of the matter. So, when a matter is taken cognizance of by the police, it is at once submitted before the District Magistrate and it is accordingly treated as if it is under adjudication by a court of law. So, Sir, this plea does not help the Government in the least. Moreover, it was then a question of fact whether the matter was actually before any Magistrate and when the Hon'ble Home Minister said that the matter was before a Magistrate, certainly the House was bound to accept that the matter was under adjudication by a court of law: So, in this particular case the adjournment motion moved by my friend certainly fulfils the primary element that it must be a matter of urgent public importance; it is also a matter of recent occurrence, because the decision of the Federal Court is very recent. The only question is: whether there is any bar of rule which would prohibit this House from considering the question. The only bar which is contemplated in the rules of this House is that it must not refer to a matter which is under adjudication by a court of law and as the matter is not yet under adjudication by any court of law, I think the objection raised by the Hon'ble the Home Minister cannot stand.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I have given careful consideration to the subject. Now, from the statement of the Hon'ble the Home Minister it is obvious that the matter is not in *seisin* of any court, and whether a particular matter is *sub judice* or not is not a question of inference but a question of fact. According to the rules of appeal framed by the Privy Council "the appellant shall lodge his Petition of Appeal where the Record arrives in England printed, within a period of four months from the date of such arrival in the case of Appeals from Courts situate in any of the countries or places named in Schedule B hereto, and within a period of two months from the same date in the case of Appeals from any other courts". So even if Government had despatched the appeal papers by air to England they should still have four months from the time of their arrival in London for filing the appeal. But according to section 210 of the Government of India Act "All authorities, civil and judicial throughout the Federation, shall act in aid of the Federal Court". Here the Federal Court passed a judgment and the Government have not acted according to the decision of the Federal Court. It involves the liberty of certain citizens: it is also a matter of recent occurrence. So it is certainly a matter of urgent public importance. Also according to the rule referred to by Mr. Kamini Kumar Datta, it does not refer to any matter which is under adjudication by court of law. It would be under adjudication when the appeal is actually filed. In this view of the matter, I allow the adjournment motion. I propose to fix tomorrow for the discussion of the adjournment motion. Is there any objection to its being taken up tomorrow?

Mr. MESBAHUDDIN AHMED: Sir, I suggest that it may be taken up at a later date.

Mr. PRESIDENT: There is no other date available except tomorrow and Saturday.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: Sir, tomorrow is better.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I think tomorrow would be more convenient. In this connection, I may mention that there is a suggestion that the House should meet at 9 o'clock in the morning in order to enable the other House to meet a little earlier. So, I propose to adjourn the House till 9 o'clock tomorrow and I fix the time for discussion of the adjournment motion at 9 o'clock tomorrow.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Sir, will it not be more convenient to fix the hour of sitting from 11-30 to 1-30?

Mr. PRESIDENT: No.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: Will there be any questions tomorrow?

Mr. PRESIDENT: No, there will be no questions tomorrow.

Mr. NARESH NATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, is it your desire that the House should meet from 9 o'clock every day?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Yes, the House will meet every day at 9 o'clock in order to enable the other House to meet a little earlier because of the *Ramzan*.

Mr. KADER BAKSH: From 9 to 11 how much time we will have?

Mr. PRESIDENT: By meeting from 9 to 11 we will have our usual two hours. Order, order. Now, I have to fix the day for the discussion of the adjournment motion. If there is no objection, I want to fix it for tomorrow.

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: There is no business before the House tomorrow, so how can we adjourn the business of the House tomorrow and take up adjournment motion?

Mr. PRESIDENT: This question appears to be very pertinent. In that case, I have to fix it today. Will you accept that? For the convenience of Government I was trying to fix it for tomorrow.

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: My difficulty is that there is a Cabinet meeting tomorrow morning, and I have other important business also. Therefore, I am afraid tomorrow will not be quite suitable for us.

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: Yes, Sir, there is a Cabinet meeting tomorrow, and I don't think the Hon'ble Chief Minister will be able to prepare a suitable answer even for the satisfaction of the House if this matter is taken up for discussion tomorrow.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. I quite appreciate the difficulties of Government. In that case, we have to fix the adjournment motion for discussion on the non-official day. But this I shall do only with the consent and concurrence of the honourable members.

(Many honourable members: No, no, not on any non-official day.)

Mr. MESBAHUDDIN AHMED: Sir, I would suggest that the adjournment motion be taken up on a non-official day, one hour being devoted to non-official business and one hour to the adjournment motion.

Mr. PRESIDENT: That offers a way out. Is the House prepared to agree to this suggestion? The suggestion is that the House should sit one hour longer on the next non-official day.

(Several honourable members: No, Sir, we want full two hours.)

Mr. PRESIDENT: But if you want Government to give a comprehensive reply to the adjournment motion, I think you also should give them sufficient time to prepare the reply. The Hon'ble the Home Minister has got to study the question.

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHOLANABISH: Let us rather sit one hour more on an official day.

Mr. PRESIDENT: In that case, I shall have to fix Friday the 17th for this motion and we should sit one hour more. We begin at 8-30 a.m. instead of at 9 a.m. and sit upto 11-30 a.m., so that we may devote two hours to the adjournment motion and one hour to non-official business. That is final.

Panel of Chairmen.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Under rule 6 of the Bengal Legislative Council Procedue Rules, I nominate the following gentlemen on the Panel of Chairmen for the ensuing session:—

Mr. Kamini Kumar Dutta,
Mr. W. B. G. Laidlaw,
Khan Bahadur M. A. Momin, C.I.E., and
Mr. Haridas Mazumdar.

House Committee.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Under rule 122 of the Bengal Legislative Council Procedure Rules, I nominate—

The Deputy President (Chairman, *ex-officio*),
Mrs. K. D'Rozario,
Mr. R. W. N. Ferguson,
Mr. Nur Ahmed,
Mr. Birendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury,
Mr. Moazzem Ali Chowdhury, and
Mr. Ranajit Pal Chowdhury,

on the House Committee for the current session.

Governor's Assent to Bill.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I have to inform the House that the Bengal Non-Agricultural Tenancy (Temporary Provisions) Extending Bill, 1943, which was passed by both Chambers of the Bengal Legislature, has been assented to by His Excellency the Governor under the provisions of section 75 of the Government of India Act, 1935.

Bengal Vagrancy Ordinance, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Saiyed Muazzamuddin Hosain.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: With your permission, I beg to lay the Bengal Vagrancy Ordinance, 1943, before the Council.

Presentation of the Budget.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Hon'ble Mr. Goswami will now present the Budget.

The Hon'ble Mr. TULSI CHANDRA GOSWAMI: Mr. President, I rise to present to the Bengal Legislative Council the Budget for the year 1943-44.

This is the second time that the House is being called upon to consider the estimates for the current year. The first presentation took place on the 17th February, 1943, when the Fazlul Huq Ministry was in office. The estimates were fully discussed on the floor of the House for three days commencing on the 23rd of February and the proceedings were duly concluded by a reply from the Finance Minister touching upon the various points raised in the course of the debate. So far as this House was concerned, therefore, nothing further remained to be done about the Budget. In consequence, however, of certain events into the details of which it is not necessary for me to enter, the consideration of the Budget in the other House could not be completed and the requisite Schedule of authorised expenditure could not therefore be authenticated by the Governor in terms of section 80 (2) of the Government of India Act. Thus it is that more than five months into the current financial year Government find themselves without due sanction for the appropriations necessary to carry on the administration. It has been decided in these circumstances to initiate the Budget proceedings *de novo* by placing before the Legislature fresh estimates for the current year. The presentation of a Budget in the middle of the year is not in accord with Rule 12 of the Bengal Legislative Council (Governor's) Rules. In order to regularise the position the Governor has been pleased, after consultation with you, Mr. President, to make an *ad hoc* rule authorising the presentation of the current year's Budget during the course of the year.

Sir, it is not my desire to tax the patience of the House and waste its valuable time by going over the details of estimates which have already

been fully considered and discussed. I propose, threfore, to confine my observations to those particulars in which the present estimates differ from those laid before the House in February last.

The Budget which was considered by the House in February last was drawn up on the basis of the revised estimates for 1942-43. The actuals for that year have since been received. They do not, in the great majority of cases, differ sufficiently from the revised to justify any revision of our original forecasts. The only items under which these forecasts have had to be modified are:—Revenue Receipts—Excise, Stamps and other taxes and duties. Revenue Expenditure—General Administration, Agriculture, Famine extraordinary charges and interest. Capital Expenditure—85A—Capital outlay on provincial schemes connected with the war, 1939.

The opening balance has been modified so as to agree with the actual closing balance for 1942-43. Changes have also been made in the Debt Deposit Section of the Budget in the light of subsequent developments. Estimates under all other heads remain as before.

I shall explain very briefly the reasons for the main variations.

The present estimate of revenue receipts stands at 18 crores 44 lakhs which is some 2½ crores better than the original estimate of 16 crores 2 lakhs. The improvement is shared by three main heads, viz., 89 lakhs under Excise, 70 lakhs under Stamps and 83 lakhs under other taxes and duties.

Two factors are responsible for the increase under Excise. One is increased consumption due to the large influx of non-Bengali labourers, camp-followers and evacuees who are addicted to liquor and other excise products. The other is a very substantial enhancement of the rates of duty on liquor, ganja and opium undertaken with the two-fold objective of reducing consumption and mopping up surplus purchasing power.

Under Stamps, the bulk of the improvement amounting to 58 lakhs, occurs under "Non-Judicial" and is due to an expansion in the volume of transactions, like transfers of immovable property, for which non-judicial stamps are required. An increase of 12 lakhs under "Judicial" is due mainly to larger institution of Tamadi and other suits.

Out of the total increase of 83 lakhs under other taxes and Duties some 44 lakhs are due to enhancement of the rates of levy in respect of Entertainment Tax, Betting Tax and Electricity Duty with effect from 1st May, 1943, in terms of the Bengal Finance Act, 1943. The bulk of the remaining increase occurs under Sales Tax and is due to the general rise in the price of commodities.

The original estimate provided for a revenue expenditure of 17 crores 55 lakhs. This has been raised in the present estimate to 25 crores 81 lakhs —an increase of about 8¼ crores. The bulk of this is accounted for by three main heads, viz., Agriculture, 82 lakhs; Famine Relief, 3 crores 39 lakhs; and Extraordinary charges, 3 crores 87 lakhs—a total of 8 crores 8 lakhs. The remainder of the increase is due to the fact that owing to an increase in the estimate of loans to be taken from India, interest charges

have gone up by nearly 13 lakhs; and there is an increase of about 3 lakhs in the General Administration Budget owing to the number of Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries being greater than was anticipated in the original estimate.

The increase under Agriculture is due to charges on account of the "Grow More Food" scheme for which there was no provision in the original estimate. The details are as follows:—

	Lakhs.
Distribution of *aman* paddy seeds	68
Distribution of *rabi* seeds	6½
Distribution of vegetable seeds	2½
Distribution of *aus* paddy seeds	3½
Distribution of fodder crops	1½
Total	82

Under Famine, the original estimate contained a precautionary provision of 13 lakhs. The present estimate stands at 3 crores 52 lakhs. The increase is due to a serious deterioration of the economic situation over the greater part of the province owing to flood, cyclone and above all, the fantastically high price of rice.

Out of the total increase of 3 crores 87 lakhs under "Extraordinary charges" 3½ crores represent the loss on account of sale of subsidised foodstuff to the public and to Government employees on small pay. Such sale is being carried out through the agency of "control" shops in the case of the public and of special grain shops in the case of low paid Government servants. Of the remaining increase, 27 lakhs is due to expansion of the Department of Civil Supplies and 10½ lakhs is on account of subventions to the Corporation of Calcutta.

Revenue Deficit.

The net effect of an improvement of 2½ crores in receipts and an increase of 8¼ crores in expenditure is an enhancement of the revenue deficit by close upon 6 crores. In the original estimate the revenue deficit stood at a crore and 53 lakhs. This figure has been raised. in the present estimate to 7 crores 36 lakhs.

Capital Expenditure.

There has been an increase of 50 lakhs under the Capital head. It represents the unadjusted capital outlay on trading transactions for which provision has been made under the new head "85A—Capital outlay on Provincial Schemes connected with the War" opened in the current year under intsructions from the Auditor-General. The schmes for which provision has been included under this head are—

Purchase of foodgrains other than wheat:

Purchase of wheat and wheat products:

Supply of foodstuff at concession rates to—

(a) the Police force,

(b) Civic Guard and A.R.P. staff, and

(c) other Government servants;

Purchase and distribution of standard cloth: and

Purchase of salt.

It is estimated that no loss will accrue in respect of transactions relating to the purchase of wheat and wheat products, standard cloth and salt. In regard to foodgrains other than wheat, the total loss involved in sales at concession rates is estimated at 3½ crores out of which 2½ crores is on account of subsidised sale to the public and the balance is on account of subsidised sale to Government employees. The whole of this loss will be adjusted, as already explained, under the revenue head "63—Extraordinary charges" by the deduction from the Capital head.

The Salt Purchase Scheme is designed to build up a reserve stock of salt for this province as a precaution against shortage in future. As this reserve is not going to be sold for the present, the capital outlay of 50 lakhs required for this purpose will remain outstanding at the close of the year.

Now, Sir, coming to the Debt Deposit Section, in the original estimate the surplus outside the Revenue Account stood at 86 lakhs. This has arisen in the present estimate to 7 crores 36 lakhs. The improvement of 6½ crores is the result of larger borrowing from the Centre set off to some extent by a larger issue of agricultural loans.

The original estimate made no provision for loans apart from the Civil Defence advance of one crore. The net borrowing according to the present estimate stands at 10½ crores including advances for ways and means purposes and for the purchase of foodgrains likely to remain outstanding at the close of the year. Against the improvement of 9½ crores of this account is to be offset a net worsening of 3 crores under Advances to cultivators owing to heavier disbursement of agricultural loans necessitated by the serious deterioration in the economic condition throughout the province.

It will appear from the foregoing analysis that the anticipated revenue deficit in the current year is 7 crores 36 lakhs and that it is proposed to borrow sufficiently to secure an equivalent surplus in Debt Deposit Section of the Budget and so counterbalance the deficit on revenue account. According to this arrangement, the opening balance of 2 crores 60 lakhs remains intact as the closing balance for the year.

To sum up: The House will observe that in spite of an improvement in revenue of about 2½ crores, the revenue deficit has increased from a crore and a half to 7 crores 36 lakhs. In Bengal, of late we have unfortunately grown accustomed to deficit budgets; but a deficit of over 7 crores, that is to say, of considerably more than half of our total pre-war revenue, is staggering in its magnitude and is one that would have seemed unthinkable twelve months ago. On the other hand the conditions confronting us today are quite unparalleled. The widespread misery caused by the ravages of flood and cyclone and above all by the acute shortage of rice has left Government no choice but to undertake the task of organising relief

throughout the province regardless of cost. In order to reduce the startling gap between our expenditure and our revenue, Government propose to impose an income-tax on agricultural incomes and to enhance the sales tax. But since no additional revenue from these sources can be expected before 1944-45, there is no alternative in the current year but to meet the deficit by borrowing.

Mr. President, I have attempted to present before the House a faithful picture of the financial position of the Government of Bengal. The outstanding feature of the present budget is relief of distress. As I have already declared elsewhere, it is the policy of Government to undertake in the largest possible measure the task that has been imposed upon them by the prevailing extraordinary circumstances. This is a time when the closest co-operation between Government and people can alone save us all. Distress, and a desire to serve will, I fervently hope, combine to bring into existence a co-ordination of efforts which will be of permanent value when normal times return, and the unusual energy called forth by the present situation and the sacrifices made in the cause of humanity will be rewarded by the establishment of an equilibrium in our social and economic life.

Statement on the Food Situation by the Hon'ble Minister, Civil Supplies.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Hon'ble Mr. Suhrawardy.

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: Mr. President, Sir, let me in a few words place before the House the present food situation. As anticipated by me—and not only by me but as anticipated by every living person in Bengal—the position has deteriorated. But it was bound to deteriorate with continuing consumption and inadequate supplies. Distress is widely prevalent, caused both by high prices as well as scarcity of foodgrains. The scarcity of foodgrains has affected primarily the submerged section of society—the section that has always been with us—the poor and the destitute, and the beggars who live on the charity of their fellow-countrymen and whom the villagers, with their traditional hospitality, maintain.

Apart from this, other sections of the people have been affected, viz., the casual labourer, the landless labourer, and the smaller agriculturist, the middle-class family with meagre income and whose income has not kept pace with the rise in the cost of living. In order to meet their varying needs, relief operations have been undertaken on a colossal scale in the various recognised forms—gratuitous relief, test relief works and agricultural loan. To these forms has also been added the cheap foodgrain shops, but it is obvious that money alone cannot meet the requirements where foodgrains are absent. My efforts, therefore, have been mainly directed towards the procurement of foodgrains and in an attempt to get supplies into Bengal.

When the first basic plan failed to procure a sufficiency, free trade was introduced and in spite of the opposition to free trade, in spite of attempts to requisition stocks and to prevent its movement outside the various

provinces, we were able substantially to supplement our resources. On Government account, we got substantial quantities and employers of labour and ordinary traders were able to get in some more. It is only through that mechanism that we have been able to get our controlled shops going, we have been able to send foodgrains to the deficit districts, we have been able to open free kitchens in Calcutta and outside, we have been able to distribute foodgrains to the essential services. The employers too have been able to import a certain amount of foodgrains by which they have fed their labour without taxing Government resources and the public in Calcutta have continued to be fed. Prices which were shooting up were arrested and came down and even fell. The boundaries have been put up once more, but our neighbouring provinces have assured us that they will allow all rice which they had requisitioned, and which had been contracted for and of other rice under contracts to be released to us. The Premier of Orissa, who saw conditions for himself in Calcutta, has agreed to send us some more rice and paddy from the stocks of that province. Bihar would be prepared to send us more gram and after the Eastern States have supplied the quota which has been allotted to them, they have agreed to send us any surplus which may be found.

Under the new basic plan, Bengal has been allotted a considerable amount of wheat, but very little rice. My attempts have been mostly directed to bring home to the Government of India our perilous position and it is indeed a relief for me to say that both Sir Azizul Haque, and Sir J. P. Srivastava who is at present the Food Member, realise our condition and I found a change in the policy of the Government of India which augurs well for the future. Attempts are being made to procure as much as possible for the difficult months which lie ahead and transport has also been organised. Over and above the basic quota, the Punjab has agreed to send us 15,000 tons of rice and the Central Provinces 8,000 tons of rice. Many other provinces have agreed to search their larder and to send foodgrains to us. This from outside.

From within, we have set up an *aus* purchasing organisation coupled with price control. I regret that the trade has not responded to our policy. The fight may be long and bitter but we are determined to succeed and to see that prices are maintained. Bengal has also been organised on a famine basis and relief organisations are being set up in every nook and corner. I am sure that the honourable members are in possession of the scheme which I specially instructed should be sent to them. They will find in them complete details of the work, which, I trust, have their approval. Special attention has been paid to the areas surrounding Calcutta which are in a very bad way and to some of the outlying districts where there is great distress. There has been an influx of destitutes into Calcutta and unfortunately several cases of death. Without supplies it was not possible for me to set up relief centres in every single place where there is destitution and this influx was inevitable. We are taking steps to remove them, house them, feed them, and ultimately to repatriate them after relief kitchens have been opened up in their own areas. Within Calcutta itself,

several relief organisations have been set up and the destitutes are able to find a fair meal everyday. Government is assisting these relief organisations to the best of its ability but there is still considerable scope for non-official charity and it is indeed a very hopeful sign that more and more money is being subscribed and relief funds have been opened in almost every part of India in order to alleviate the sufferings in Bengal. I would advise that a portion of the relief fund should be spent towards providing standard cloth to the destitutes, a portion for the special feeding of mothers and infants with milk and barley, and with a portion foodgrains should be procured from other parts of India. The Hon'ble the Food Member, Sir J. P. Srivastava, for whose interest and anxiety to assist Bengal we shall always be grateful, has issued instructions that free foodgrains will be allowed to be sent outside the provinces or states and will not be counted with the basic quota. Government of Bengal will be glad to assist by paying the freight for these foodgrains should the donors so desire, for what we need most of all is not money but foodgrains from outside, and as far as possible, in the shape of rice. Latterly, foodgrains have been coming in from the Punjab in large quantities. As to wheat, they are being ground in our mills and distributed to the labourers through the employers and to the public through our controlled shops. More and more *atta* will be placed in our shops and I hope that we shall soon be in a position to send, if not a sufficiency, at least some foodgrains to the deficit areas to alleviate their distressed conditions.

Vigorous steps are being taken to ration Calcutta; more and more shops are being opened pending complete rationing and I hope that the next month will see the scheme in full operation.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. The House stands adjourned till 8-30 a.m. on Friday, the 17th September.

Adjournment.

The Council then adjourned till 8-30 a.m. on Friday, the 17th September, 1943.

Members absent.

The following members were absent from the meeting held on the 15th September, 1943:—

(1) Khan Bahadur Naziruddin Ahmad.

(2) Mr. Narendra Chandra Dutta.

(3) Mr. R. W. N. Ferguson.

(4) Mr. Mohamed Hossain.

(5) Maulana Muhammad Akrum Khan.

(6) Mr. Ranajit Pal Chaudhuri.

(7) Mr. R. S. Purssell.

(8) Khan Bahadur Kazi Abdur Rashid.

(9) Dr. Kasiruddin Talukdar.

(10) Khan Sahib Maulvi Wahiduzzaman.

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BENGAL LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DEBATES

Third Session, 1943—No. 2.

THE COUNCIL met in the Legislative Chamber of the Legislative Building, Calcutta, on Friday, the 17th September, 1943, at 8-30 a.m., being the second day of the Third Session of 1943, pursuant to section 62(2)(a) of the Government of India Act, 1935.

Mr. President (the Hon'ble Sir BIJOY PRASAD SINGH ROY, K.C.I.E.) was in the Chair.

Non-official Resolutions.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. I propose to take up non-official resolutions first and allow discussion on them for one hour and then take up the adjournment motion.

A resolution by Mr. Bankim Chandra Datta was being discussed during the last Session on the 9th July, 1943, and to refresh the memory of honourable members I may read it out. It is as follows:—

That this Council is of opinion that the Government of Bengal should take immediate steps—

(a) to set at liberty all persons detained in prison or restrained under rule 129 or rule 26 of the Defence of India Rules or under Regulation III of 1818 for their views or activities;

(b) to release all persons convicted for offences connected with the movement following the arrests of Congress Leaders in August, 1942;

(c) to appoint a Tribunal, consisting of at least two persons of the position of High Court Judge, to review all cases of political security prisoners and convicts after giving full opportunity to the persons concerned to meet the charges, if any, against them, in case there be any delay in their release; and

(d) to appoint a non-official committee composed of all parties in the Legislature to advise the Government on the amenities and treatment provided for in jails and detention camps for different classes of political prisoners and detenus.

To this resolution an amendment was moved by Khan Sahib Abul Quasem which runs as follows:—

That for all the words occurring in the resolution, after the words "That this Council" the following be substituted, namely:—

"records its appreciation of the efforts of the present Ministry to implement their programme in regard to the policy of release of political prisoners and the amenities granted to them and their families and is further of opinion that considering the present

political conditions in the province, Government should expedite the release of political prisoners by reviewing individual cases and should grant suitable and generous amenities to those who might not be released at once and their families."

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: On a point of order, Sir, regarding the amendment. It appears that the amendment is being circulated only today although it is an amendment to a resolution which was moved during the last session. Therefore, I submit it is not in order and the House should not take any notice of it.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. This amendment was moved immediately after the main resolution was moved on the last occasion.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: I may inform Mr. Das that my humble self moved the amendment during the last session.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The resolution and the amendment are now under discussion.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: On a point of order, Sir. The amendment has been circulated on the 17th September (today) only whereas the resolution was moved in the last session. I do not think, Sir, it is in order, because we want proper notice of the amendment.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Das, the amendment was moved in the last session and it is now open to discussion. Mr. Humayun Kabir was then in possession of the House but I do not see him here. Shall I take it that there is no other speaker?

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Sir, I rise to speak in support of this resolution. It requires no speech to support a resolution like this, as it has been debated and discussed threadbare on the floor of this House. The whole country knows that several persons have been detained without trial, without their cases being reviewed by the authorities. Some puppet Ministers are carrying out the behest of the Executive and these people are being detained in jails. They forget the fact that these persons are no longer struggling and fighting against the bureaucracy——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Mazumdar, you used the expression "puppet". You should withdraw it.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: I bow to your decision, Sir. It seems, Sir, the responsibility of the Ministry is only to see that these people are clapped in prison and not to see to the convenience and amenities that are necessary for their maintenance inside the prison and to see to the adequate provision for the maintenance of the families of these people. Now, Sir, this resolution demands to set at liberty all those persons who are detained without trial or in the alternative to appoint a Tribunal consisting of two persons of the position of High Court Judges to review all these cases. That is a modest demand; and there is also the demand for the appointment of a non-official committee composed of all parties,

including the Party in power, to advise Government about the granting of amenities to persons detained in jails and in prison camps. That is a request which is quite modest and I hope and trust that by withdrawing the amendment and by wholeheartedly supporting this resolution the Government would do something to show to the world that they think for the country, they think for those who work for the liberation of the country. They may disagree with the methods but the end and the object in view of many of these persons are to liberate their country. This is a noble ideal. I have already stated that we would not have been in a position to sit here and the Ministers to function there but for the struggle of these selfless workers. It is as the result of the sacrifices and sufferings cheerfully undergone by these patriots that our country has been passing from one reform to another till a full-fledged Independent State is ushered in. I hope and trust that our Ministers who are equally interested in the liberties of their country, who are equally interested in the welfare and prosperity of their country will see their way to accept the resolution *in toto* and help the country on its onward march.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Sir, I rise to oppose the resolution and support the amendment. Sir, the resolution is too wide to be given effect to and the amendment seems to be very sound and reasonable. Sir, this amendment urges the present Ministry to implement their programme regarding the policy of release of political prisoners and the amenities granted to them and their families. It is further of opinion that considering the present political condition of the province, the Government should expedite the release of political prisoners and at the same time grant suitable and generous amenities to those prisoners who might not be released at once. Sir, this amendment is liberal in its wording. It comprises all aspects of the original resolution. Sir, it goes far enough to give relief to those who might not be released. The Chief Minister, before he assumed office, propounded his policy as regards these political prisoners. Sir, we the Muslim League Party stand for liberty and freedom for every individual subject to the limitation that the liberty should not be exercised in such a way as to disturb the public tranquillity and public peace. Even if an individual citizen disturbs public peace, then for the good of the society his liberty should be curbed. Sir, we are passing through a crisis and our province is passing through a very critical period. It stands on the forefront of the Eastern War Zone and so nobody should be allowed to create disturbances in this province. Sir, only on that criterion, on that supreme necessity the liberty of citizens may be curbed for the time being. Sir, judging from that criterion I urge upon the Ministry to look into the matter and see whether any individual whose liberty has been restrained unnecessarily, may be set at liberty. Sir, this amendment asks the Ministry to expedite the release of those prisoners who might be set at liberty. This amendment is so fair and so comprehensive that I think the original mover should accept it and withdraw the original resolution.

Sir, with these few words, I support the amendment.

Mr. KRISHNA CHANDRA ROY CHOWDHURY: Sir, hitherto I refrained from criticising Government in connection with the detention of persons whose activities were prejudicial to the defence of India. But, Sir, during the last four or five months my opinion has somewhat changed. Sir, I had some correspondence with the Hon'ble the Chief Minister and Mr. Blair, the Chief Secretary, in respect of two persons whom I have known for the last ten years as anti-Congressmen. They were arrested after the arrest of the Congress leaders in August last year. I refer to the correspondence that passed between me and the Chief Minister; unfortunately he did not condescend to reply to that letter. Well, the first person I have in mind is Nabajati Burman. What was he? He was a Labour leader. He was associated with the Hon'ble Mr. Suhrawardy in trade union work for five years. He was placed in charge of an important and responsible labour-organising work as the Secretary to the Bengal Chemical Workers Union. Well, I have reason to believe that his arrest had something to do with the influence over the police of the employers of the Bengal Chemical workers. The Bengal Chemical bosses wanted to get rid of him, and I think that the police were informed by them about his political connection. But what pains me most is that I have been writing to the Chief Minister half a dozen letters pleading for some allowance for his poor wife—the whole family is absolutely left unprovided for—but no reply, not even an acknowledgment was sent. I mentioned in those letters that a reference might be made to the Hon'ble Mr. Suhrawardy. His people saw Mr. Suhrawardy, and Mr. Suhrawardy, I presume, remembers the whole case, and Mr. Suhrawardy is reported to have said to his people that he would tell the Hon'ble the Chief Minister that he was a Labour leader and had no connection with the Congress.

The second case—I am glad to admit that after a prolonged correspondence he was released—was really a very peculiar one. It was a case of a young unemployed Brahmin boy, Jogeswar Chakravarty. I found for him a job in the Bengal Telephone Corporation as a clerk. His offence was that he used to sleep in a room where one or two Congressmen used to sleep. He could not afford to pay for the rent of the whole room; so he shared it with one who was a Congressman. When the Congressman was arrested, he too was arrested. Sir, I challenge Government, so far as this man is concerned, to produce any evidence incriminating him in any subversive activity. He does not know any politics. He could hardly understand a Congress resolution. He was a petty clerk, not even a matriculate. The poor fellow was arrested and kept in jail for six months. I pleaded that some allowance should be given to his family whose members were actually starving. His father, an old *pandit*, wrote several letters that he was begging from his neighbours because the said Jogeswar was the only earning member of the family.

So, Sir, from these two cases, I judged that the Hon'ble Minister of the Home Department does not look into matters, does not look into the files of the political detenus, as he should do. I cannot say anything about the other cases; in fact, I am not interested in those cases where big political guns are attacking the Ministry. I have nothing to do with

them. But for the sake of justice to those people who have been deprived of their liberty on mere suspicion—for them at least the Government should consider favourably the question of granting minimum allowances to their dependants.

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: Mr. President, Sir, as this resolution is very much akin to the adjournment motion that is going to be moved later on, I do not propose to deal extensively with the main demand in the resolution, because I feel that the honourable members have almost forgotten what has been said before on this motion by the mover of the resolution and have come prepared with speeches for the adjournment motion. It is, therefore, much better that my reply should come by way of reply to the debate on the adjournment motion. As regards the amenities of political security prisoners, I may inform the House that recently I visited the Dacca Jail and granted interviews to two batches of security prisoners of seven each who came in a representative capacity from two wards in which they were kept. Their main grievance can be boiled down to this: under the existing rules their clothes have got to be returned before new clothes are allotted to them. They ask that instead of being compelled to return them they should be allowed to keep them. That is their main grievance. Their other demands included a little more facilities for interviews and inter-correspondence between jails, which I am glad to say have already been sanctioned. Another demand of theirs is about the size of the papers on which their letters are written. These are some of the petty and minor complaints that were placed before me by the security prisoners. By this I do not mean that they could not have anything more to demand. I fully agree that people who are detained in jails can have many things to demand and I also do not say that detention in jail is a thing which can under any circumstances be welcome to anybody. I have never argued before this House or anywhere else that we are providing such amenities or that we are giving them such facilities as would make jail life attractive to them. I realise that depriving a man of his liberty and keeping him confined to one place and meeting the same person day in and day out, and what is the worst of all, the placing of restrictions on a man's movements is one of the greatest hardships that a man can labour under, and there is no doubt whatsoever and I have never approved of the suggestion that however pleasant the amenities might be, they can ever be any inducement for anybody to court arrest and go to jail. I would, however, at the same time say from my experience of the last six years that we have now met so many of their legitimate demands that are within the bounds of what is permissible while they are in jail that their grievances have practically been reduced to nil. I may say that as far as the main thing which is worrying the prisoners is concerned, namely, retaining the old clothes when new ones are supplied to them, I am prepared to concede to that as well as to their other grievances. So I feel that so far as the amenities are concerned, practically there is no serious complaint which they have got. I may say also that one of the things which concern not only the security prisoners

but also those who are in jail relates to the delay in forwarding letters to the addresses. I have received many complaints to this effect and I am personally looking into this matter. I have discussed this matter with the Deputy Inspector-General, Intelligence Branch, who has assured me that the additional staff granted to him have already been able to clear up arrears and I believe three days ago I was informed that they were four days behind the current letters. Since then I have again received complaints and have drawn the attention of the District Intelligence Branch and told them that they must try and see that these letters are expeditiously sent to the Intelligence Branch for sending them to the proper addressees. Therefore, so far as grievances and complaints are concerned, they have been reduced to the minimum.

Now, Sir, as far as the release of detenus is concerned, a great deal depends on the present situation of the country, the atmosphere that has been created by the activities of those who belong to the subversive organisation and who are not detained but are at large. I may remind the members that when we released in 1937-38 all the persons detained under the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act numbering 1,500, even then the process was one of gradual release. So, it will be seen that there was never wholesale release and one of the points that was kept in view at that time was that the Government had got to see how things developed with the process of gradual release. The release has got to be gradual and slow and if we find that those who are released are not taking part in subversive activities and that the atmosphere of the country is suitable and favourable, then we would go in for extensive release.

So far as the demand for the appointment of a Tribunal is concerned, at the present moment we do not think it is necessary to have a Tribunal. So long as we could release by reviewing individual cases, I do not propose to appoint a Tribunal. But when no further release could be effected in pursuance of the present policy, then it will be time for considering the question of the appointment of a Tribunal. In the meantime, I propose to proceed as at present. That is the position. In these circumstances, I hope the members will not press this resolution. I support the amendment that has been moved by Khan Sahib Abul Quasem.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: Sir, I was one of the members who gave notice of an identical resolution but you allowed Mr. Bankim Chandra Datta to move his. Since Mr. Bankim Chandra Datta is not present, may I have the right of reply?

Mr. PRESIDENT: No, you cannot do so. Your position is exactly that of a supporter of the resolution.

Rai Bahadur KESHAB CHANDRA BANERJEE: On a point of information, Sir. The Hon'ble the Home Minister has said that the complaints of these political prisoners and detenus have been reduced to the minimum. Sir, I happened to be an interested visitor in the Dacca Central Jail in charge of the security prisoners and one of the complaints that had been referred to me was that the detenus were not receiving their

allowances and their families were not being paid allowances in time. Sometime five or six months passed away and no allowance was paid. These were the complaints the political prisoners brought to my notice and I in my turn brought these complaints to the notice of the then Chief Minister. I do not know what happened since then. Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to enlighten us on this point?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: Sir, the complaint about the delay in payment generally comes from a prisoner whose case for allowance has not been considered by Government or where orders have not been passed or whose case has been rejected on the ground that the principle on which allowances are given does not apply to his case. Therefore, this is a different question altogether. But where Government have sanctioned allowances and still the prisoners are not being paid their allowances regularly, such cases, if they are brought to my notice, certainly I will look into them. When I inquired of the prisoners about their grievances, they said that their demands were quite different. Their demands were for improvement of amenities. For example, they asked me to have the facility of a radio which has been given in one or two jails in Cuttack, and I told them that I would consider their demand and see if this could be given.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: On a point of information, Sir. Will the Hon'ble Minister look into the cases when they are brought to his notice?

Mr. PRESIDENT: What is your question?

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Sir, my question is whether the Hon'ble the Home Minister, when the cases of delays will be brought to his notice, will deal with them expeditiously?

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA MUKHERJEE: On a point of information, Sir. May I ask the Hon'ble Chief Minister, with reference to State prisoners who have been detained under Regulation III, whether his attention has been drawn to the provisions of that Regulation with regard to amenities? They are as follows:—

(Here the honourable member began to read the provisions).

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am sure the Hon'ble Minister is aware of them.

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: This has been brought to my notice and we have to a certain extent complied with these provisions as far as the spirit and letter of the law are concerned. We are giving family allowance to Regulation III prisoners which, if they had been detained as security prisoners, they would not have got. The only thing which we are not giving is personal allowance, and that for certain reasons. Instead of money we are trying to provide in kind.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The following resolution has been moved——

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA DATTA: Sir, may I now be allowed to exercise my right of reply? Although unfortunately I was not present, I was told of the substance of the Hon'ble Chief Minister's statement.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Datta, I am afraid the mover of the resolution has a responsibility and he should be here in time if he desires to exercise his right of reply. I am already on my legs. The following resolution has been moved:—

"That this Council is of opinion that the Government of Bengal should take immediate steps—

(*a*) to set at liberty all persons detained in prison or restrained under rule 129 or rule 26 of the Defence of India Rules or under Regulation III of 1818 for their views or activities;

(*b*) to release all persons convicted for offences connected with the movement following the arrests of Congress Leaders in August, 1942;

(*c*) to appoint a Tribunal, consisting of at least two persons of the position of High Court Judge, to review all cases of political security prisoners and convicts after giving full opportunity to the persons concerned to meet the charges, if any, against them, in case there be any delay in their release; and

(*d*) to appoint a non-official committee composed of all parties in the Legislature to advise the Government on the amenities and treatment provided for in jails and detention camps for different classes of political prisoners and detenus";

since which an amendment has been moved by Khan Sahib Abul Quasem as follows:—

"That for all the words occurring in the resolution, after the words 'That this Council' the following be substituted, namely:—

'records its appreciation of the efforts of the present Ministry to implement their programme in regard to the policy of release of political prisoners and the amenities granted to them and their families and is further of opinion that considering the present political conditions in the province, Government should expedite the release of political prisoners by reviewing individual cases and should grant suitable and generous amenities to those who might not be released at once and their families'."

I will now put the amendment to vote.

The amendment being put, a division was challenged with the following result:—

AYES—26.

Khan Sahib Fariduddin Ahmed.
Mr. Meebahuddin Ahmed.
Mr. Nur Ahmed.
Mr. Sultanuddin Ahmed.
Khan Sahib Nurul Amin.
Khan Sahib Abdul Aziz.
Mr. Kader Baksh.
Mr. D. L. Barua.
Mr. Hamidul Huq Chowdhury.
Mr. Humayun Reza Chowdhury.
Khan Bahadur Abdul Hamid Chowdhury.
Mr. C. E. Clarke.
Mr. D. J. Cohen.
Khan Bahadur Abdul Gefran.
The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Saiyed Muazzamuddin Hosain.
Mr. Latafat Hossain.
Mr. W. B. G. Laidlaw.
Mr. Abdul Latiff.
Khan Sahib Subid Ali Molla.
Khan Bahadur M. A. Momin.
Khan Saheb Abul Quasem.
Khan Bahadur Muklesur Rahaman.
Mr. Biren Roy.
Mr. S. N. Sanyal.
Mr. Yakub H. S. Sattar.
Khan Bahadur M. Shamsuzzoha.

NOES—13.

Mr. Altaf Ali.
Mr. S. C. Chakraverti.
Mr. L. C. Das.
Mr. B. C. Datta.
Mr. M. R. Jaipuria.
Rai Bahadur B. M. Maitra.
Mr. H. D. Mojumdar.
Mr. N. Mahalanabish.
Mr. Naresh Nath Mookerjee.
Mr. B. C. Mukherji.
Mr. A. D. Roy.
Mr. B. K. Roy Choudhury.
Khan Sahib Maulvi Wahiduzzaman.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. The House has divided. For the amendment—26; against the amendment—13.

The amendment is, therefore, carried.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I shall now put the resolution in the amended form—

That this Council records its appreciation of the efforts of the present Ministry to implement their programme in regard to the policy of release of political prisoners and the amenities granted to them and their families and is further of opinion that considering the present political conditions in the province, Government should expedite the release of political prisoners by reviewing individual cases and should grant suitable and generous amenities to those who might not be released at once and their families.

Khan Bahadur M. A. MOMIN: On a point of order, Sir. As the amendment has been passed, don't you think that the resolution has automatically fallen through?

Mr. PRESIDENT: No. The resolution as amended has to be put to vote now.

(The resolution; as amended, was then put and agreed to.)

Mr. MESBAHUDDIN AHMED: On a point of order, Sir. I think that resolution No. 2 shown on today's list is not in order.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Sir, he cannot rise on a point of order before I move it.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Das, there is one point. You have not obtained the permission of the Hon'ble Minister in charge to move the resolution at short notice, so you cannot place the resolution before the House.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Sir, through you I appeal to the Hon'ble the Home Minister to accord his consent to this resolution.

Mr. PRESIDENT: But, it does not concern the Home Minister. It concerns the Revenue Minister.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: So far as the Food Minister is concerned, he is here.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. It does not concern the Food Minister even.

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: Sir, it appears that neither you nor your department received the consent; so I think the matter ends there.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Das, you cannot move the resolution. The next resolution stands in the name of Mr. Amulyadhone Roy.

Mr. AMULYADHONE ROY: Sir, I beg to move that this Council is of opinion that legislative measures be undertaken by the Government with a view to securing representation of the Scheduled Castes on the line of the Communal Award in the services and on the Statutory Boards of the University, Corporation, Municipalities and district and local boards of the Province.

Sir, before going into the details, I would like to read out the report which appeared in the "Hitabad" of Nagpur of July 19, 1942, in connection with the All-India Depressed Classes Conference held under the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar in which one lakh persons including 40,000 women and 60,000 men attended.

Sir, the report runs as follows:—

"Mr. V. Kurmayya, B.A., LL.B., M.L.A. (Madras), founder of the Harijan Girls' Ashram, Bezwada, Mr. D. Govinda Das, M.L.A. (Madras), President, Provincial Andhra Scheduled Castes Federation, Mr. S. Nagappa, M.L.A. (Madras), Secretary, A. P. Scheduled Castes Federation, Dr. K. Dharmanna, a Harijan Poet, broke their journey at Wardha on their way to Nagpur to attend the All-India Depressed Classes Conference and discussed with Mahatma Gandhi for nearly three quarters of an hour the various problems of the Harijans. Mahatmaji replied to some of the questions and promised to give his answers to the rest in the 'Harijan'.

The following are some of the questions put to Gandhiji:

What is the position of the Harijans in the future constitution of India?

Do you advise Government and the Congress to make an effort to have a provision in the Constitution that the seats of the Harijans from Panchayat Board to the State Council be fixed on population basis?

In the course of their discussion the Harijan leaders asked Mahatma Gandhi if the Harijan Congress M. L. As. and other Congress Harijans are free from party discipline in dealing with communal problems and questions concerning the whole community.

Mahatmaji is reported to have told them without the least reservation that Congress Harijans including the M.L.As. are quite free to do anything in the interest of their community."

Sir, I think it my duty to place the facts as they are in their realities for a solution of the problem with a broader and impartial outlook, with moderation, wisdom and conciliation. Sir, it may be asked, and that very rightly, why there should be this demand for legislation in order to secure representation of the Scheduled Castes on the services and on the Boards of the different autonomous public bodies. Sir, the reply is simple. The Hindu leaders are guilty of breach of faith, as it was clearly understood by the terms of the Poona Agreement relating to local bodies. Sir, the appointments made in the local bodies since their creation and the history of election and nomination go to justify my remark. Sir, for a

better understanding of the situation it will be convenient for my purpose by way of reference to narrate the events that happened in this country with regard to the Legislatures. Sir, I want to leave out of account the period during which the Indian Councils Act beginning from the year 1861 down to the year 1920 were in operation in this country. But I shall give an account of the incidents that happened with regard to the Legislatures. Sir, during the time of the general election in the year 1936, the election, adoption and nomination of candidates for the seats allocated in the general constituencies of the 11 Legislative Assemblies in India were such——

Mr. PRESIDENT: You have one minute more.

Mr. AMULYADHONE ROY: I shall not be able to finish my speech within one minute, so I will not proceed further. But, Sir, what will be the fate of my resolution?

Mr. PRESIDENT: It will be carried over to the next session.

Adjournment motion.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I shall now take up the adjournment motion. Mr. Shrish Chandra Chakraverti.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: Sir, I beg to rise on a point of order. I would respectfully invite your attention to rule 99 of the Rules which says that "the motion must not revive discussion on a matter which has been discussed in the same session." I beg to submit for your kind consideration that since at today's meeting we have just now passed a particular resolution as amended which covers almost the same ground as the adjournment motion seeks to cover, this motion having regard to this particular rule cannot be moved.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. I have considered that point, but I find that the subject-matter of the resolution and of the adjournment motion are entirely different. The adjournment motion is being moved on the ground of the failure of the Government to give effect to the decision of the Federal Court whereas the subject-matter of the resolution that we have just now disposed of related to a different issue altogether.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: But the resolution also asked that the detenus be set at liberty.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am afraid that is not correct. Setting at liberty certain persons is one thing and failure of Government to give effect to the decision of the Federal Court is another thing.

Khan SAHIB ABUL QUASEM: But I submit that they are substantially identical.

Mr. PRESIDENT: No, that is not so. Mr. Chakraverti.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: Sir, I beg to move that this Council do adjourn its business to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the failure of the Bengal Government to set at liberty persons purported to have been detained under Rule 26 of the

Defence of India Rules, in spite of the decision of the Calcutta High Court and the recent decision of the Federal Court of India declaring the procedure adopted by the Bengal Government regarding detention as contrary to law and improper.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. I would just like to inform the House that the time-limit for this motion is two hours: 20 minutes will be allowed to the mover of the motion and 20 minutes to the Hon'ble Minister for reply; other speeches must be limited to ten minutes each.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: Mr. President, Sir, when this Ministry came into power we saw in the papers a statement about their policy to the effect that they would try their best to release political prisoners. High hopes were raised in our minds that the Hon'ble Sir Nazimuddin who is well-known as always keeping his promise would carry it out. I must say also that he has only made a beginning but that beginning seems to have no ending at all.

Another thing, he gave us to understand was that he will take every opportunity to release the persons gradually and whenever he will find it convenient he will release them one by one. I may say, Sir, that a grand opportunity has presented itself in the shape of the decision of the Calcutta High Court backed by the decision of the Federal Court, the highest tribunal in India; and fortunately the Judges concerned were one Hindu, one Muslim and one Englishman, representatives of the British Imperialism, and all these three agreed——

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: On a point of order, Sir. Is it permissible to quote High Court Judges as representatives of the British Imperialism?

Mr. SRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: Why not, is he not a representative of the British Government? As I was saying, Sir, Sir Nazimuddin has now got a splendid opportunity for releasing them. The way in which these persons were put behind the prison bar is not justified by any legal procedure nor is it in consonance with the law. Nowhere in the world the civil liberty of the people is interfered with as it has been done here. In this matter the authorities who are in charge of the civil liberty of the people should be very cautious in exercising their discretion and should not ruthlessly trample upon the liberty of any citizen like this. In this connection, I should like to quote a portion of the judgment of the majority of the Federal Court Judges—the Honourable Justices Zaffarulla and Varadachari—"we cannot condemn the procedure too strongly. It would be difficult to conceive of a more callous disregard of the provisions of the law and liberty of the subject." Every one of these orders is bad in law as the Governor did not consider it at any stage, much less satisfied himself with regard to any of the matters set out in the order of detention. This shows clearly how these imprisonments and interference with the civil liberty of the people were procured at the instance of the all-knowing and all-powerful police. The Advocate-General of Bengal also admitted before the Federal Court that the question of putting up papers before the Governor

arises only when there is disagreement between the Minister and the police. Whenever there is disagreement between the Minister and the police, the Governor steps in. This amounts to saying, Sir, that whenever a Minister, however popular and representative he may be, has the hardihood and audacity of differing from the all-powerful police, the latter will have the ready support of the Governor as has been proved in many cases. It is evident that all these orders are made as a matter of course without proper hearing of the charges. Will the honourable members of this House countenance all these things that are going on in this country? Secondly, it shows the position of the Ministers *vis-a-vis* the British Imperialism in the constitution. We are led to believe that the Minister who is in charge of a particular department has got everything to do but it has been made abundantly clear that the person who has got the last say in all matters is the representative of the British Crown. So all this much-vaunted provincial autonomy is a mere catch-phrase. So long as it suits the representative of the British Crown certain state of things will go on and when it does not suit him it cannot go on like that. So I ask the Hon'ble Ministers in general and Sir Nazimuddin in particular what they are for if this is the position, if they cannot do anything except at the dictation of the all-powerful autocrat? Therefore, what they are doing is only shielding the British Imperialism. They are ruling India like any other autocratic power elsewhere. We all hear that the Nazis and the Japanese are autocrats and that they trample upon the civil liberties of the people. The United Nations are showing their abhorrence at their action but why the very same thing is being perpetrated here Our own countrymen who are the avowed representatives of the people instead of exposing what the British Imperialism really wants to do are shielding it against charges that are being levelled against it. In our country there is no principle behind the idea of putting a particular set of persons in prison for a time. Here this principle is more honoured in its breach than in its observance. Now, I ask Sir Nazimuddin to state what is it that stands in the way of releasing the prisoners who have been imprisoned after the 1st October, 1942, as it has been implicitly stated both by the highest Tribunal in this province as well as by the highest Tribunal of India. So, I hope that Sir Nazimuddin will make the point clear and let us know what he really intends to do.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. Motion moved: that this Council do adjourn its business to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, Government's failure to release the security prisoners taken and detained under Rule 26 of the Defence of India Rules in spite of the High Court and the Federal Court's recent decisions regarding such detention as being illegal and improper.

Alhadj Khan Bahadur Shaikh MUHAMMAD JAN: Sir, I rise to support the adjournment motion moved by my esteemed friend Mr. Chakravarty. I fail to understand how any member of this House, European or Indian, who loves not only his own liberty and freedom but also of others, can oppose it on any pretext when the highest judicial authority in the land has pronounced its judgment in favour of these

unfortunate persons. Sir, it is true that an appeal is to be preferred against this decision to the Privy Council. But, Sir, I ask how long are these unfortunate innocent persons going to rot in the jails? Is not one year or more of detention sufficient to melt the hearts of the authorities or the members of this House? In my opinion it is a disgrace on the part of the Government to punish these innocent persons, and the disgrace becomes tenfold when this is done in the name or by the authority of a popular Government set up by the people, but for whose sacrifices and sufferings they would not have occupied the present position which they are occupying as Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries, etc. Sir, we must remember that the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms or the present responsible Government or Provincial Autonomy are all the results of the most strenuous efforts and unlimited hardships suffered by the patriots of the Congress and those who have supported the Congress directly or indirectly according to their spirit of patriotism and special circumstances. Sir, it is the duty of every Indian, whether he be a Muslim Leaguer or Congressman, instead of suppressing the national movement, to encourage it, of course within legitimate bounds. We must not kill the spirit of patriotism of these countrymen of ours who are in jails. They are, I think, better capable of fighting the Japanese or the Germans than many members of this House. Sir, it is true, as has been stated by many Muslim League leaders and it was also repeated by my friend Mr. Hamidul Huq Chowdhury the other day, that the Mussalmans are not with the Congress, and that a handful of nationalist Mussalmans who are associated with the Congress are not representatives of the Mussalmans. It means, since the Congress is the fountain-head of all national activity, that Mussalmans as a community are apart from that national activity. It shows what a deplorable life of stagnation the majority of Mussalmans are leading since the fall of their great empire of 700 years, and this loss of vision is due to ease-loving reactionary leaders who have exploited the Muslim masses for their self-aggrandisement. They have not been taught so far to develop themselves into a full-fledged national group. These leaders made them constantly feel that they had been deprived of their legitimate rights and privileges by the Hindus. But they never induced them to fight for the freedom of their country. The Muslims, who once had lost their political vision, began to follow them blindly. They are indeed still following them in a precipitous path that leads only to destruction. When the future historians will reveal these painful events, one after another, the whole world will be bewildered to see how a great and powerful community of 90 millions, who had such a bright and glorious past, could be so easily duped and so cruelly ruined by a handful of selfish and reactionary leaders. Their bewilderment will be still greater to find that the ridiculously low personal interests such as Ministership, Premiership, titles, public honours, mass receptions, were placed above the national interest. To add insult to injury, all this diplomatic annihilation of the Muslim power was carried under the slogans of "Muslim Rights" and "Muslim Demands" through Leagues and Associations, said to be working for the so-called Muslim welfare. It was for a brief period when the Khilafat question cropped up

accidentally into the politics of Muslim India that Mussulmans got a new political awakening and the selfish and reactionary leaders lost control of the Muslim masses. But this period of mass awakening was not allowed to live long. The cunning reactionary leaders slowly and stealthily again caught hold of a large number of Muslims in their grip and this time they have caught them very tight. One of them is crying hoarse from the house-tops at Malabar Hill that "there is none but myself who can lead the Muslim community and no one else has the right to lead them now and for all time to come".

Mr. PRESIDENT: I think, Khan Bahadur, you should confine yourself to the motion before the House and not make such general observations.

Alhadj Khan Bahadur Shaikh MUHAMMAD JAN: All right, Sir. Coming to the motion before the House, however, I appeal to all my friends in this House, especially members belonging to the Muslim League, to rise equal to the occasion and not only to support it but to force the hands of their party Government to release their own countrymen who are full with a burning desire for freedom, without waiting for the decision of the Privy Council. We may have differences with the Congress. It may be that our legitimate rights and privileges are trampled underfoot; but for these small injustices we cannot suffer greater injustice, namely, to remain content with our present position and do nothing to break the chain of slavery. If the present ministry find themselves helpless in the matter, they should declare it on the floor of the House and should resign from office on that issue, and thus show to the world that they did not care for the office when a great principle was involved and I assure them that others will not be so shameless as to step into their empty shoes. They should remember that the honour of the Muslim community is at stake and let not posterity be ashamed of us due to the conduct of a few Mussalmans who did nothing for the emancipation of their country and for their own freedom, when others suffered untold miseries for the cause of the country. Instead of ameliorating the sufferings of their patriotic countrymen, they laughed at them and accused them of bad motives and did everything in their power to withhold the progress of the country.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. Khan Bahadur, you are indulging too much in general observations, you should confine yourself to the motion before the House.

Alhadj Khan Bahadur SHAIKH MUHAMMAD JAN: But, Sir, I have finished.

Mr. HARIDAS MAJUMDAR: Mr. President, Sir, if I rise to speak in support of the motion, I do so with a full sense of responsibility both to the Government and to the people. Sir, the motion concerns the release of prisoners detained under Rule 26 of the Defence of India Rules and some illegal detentions under Regulation III of 1818. I am, therefore, not bringing in matters relating to the failure of Government to grant adequate allowances to the families of detenus who are in dire distress, to provide necessary medical relief and other grievances in connection with interviews

or leave on parole when their dear and near ones are in death-bed? Regarding this we have heard many heart-rending stories which have been the subject-matter of discussion on many occasions. Since the establishment of the British Rule in India, ordinarily even the illiterate masses have always believed in the British justice as administered by the High Court—especially the High Court of Calcutta. It is all along in the minds of the people of this country that the judgment of the High Court is the emblem of British justice in the Indian Empire. Although the High Court of Calcutta is the creation of the British Imperialism, it decides a case and pronounces its verdict after careful consideration of all the facts and as a result of that if a person is found guilty, then he is clapped in jail. Here, Sir, the Government wrongfully confined persons under the Defence of India Rules and thus they are interfering with the individual liberty of the people. Government by their action, namely, by rearresting these persons just after they were released by the High Court judgment, have proved their Imperialistic hauteur. Government do not see what harm they have done to the people of Britain by their conduct. Hereafter, the people of India will never believe that there is such a thing as British justice in India. A feeling has already been created by the action of Government that all the courts of justice, High Court and Federal Court, are nothing but creation of British Imperialism for the purpose of keeping the people under bondage and that its administration has been proved sham without any vestige of power over the Executive. The matter does not end there. The High Court set at liberty certain persons and the Executive immediately arrested them. An appeal was made to the Federal Court by the Government of Bengal against the judgment of the High Court and the Federal Court, which is also the creation of the British Government, gave a verdict in favour of the High Court against the Government of Bengal. So, what we find is that in spite of the judgment of the highest tribunal in India to set these persons at liberty the Government took recourse to an ante-diluvion weapon—Regulation III of 1818, which late Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh described as a lawless law. These people, Sir, are in jail for an indefinite period without any trial, without giving them any opportunity to prove their innocence. They were not tried before a court of law. If I said anything against the present Government in this connection it is not so much with a view to pass a vote of censure on the Government but to strengthen their hands to fight the permanent Executive whom the Ministers always point out directly or indirectly as being the real power behind, always anxious to curtail the individual liberties of the people of this country. I know as well as the whole of India knows how much power the Cabinet has in this connection. But I need not go into that for the present. Sir, after all, the Ministers whatever party they may belong to, consist of our own countrymen, and so I hope that they realise that tampering with individual liberty if once allowed to go unchallenged may overtake some of the present Ministers at some future date when they may not be in power. I hope and trust that in their better wisdom Government would not oppose the motion. If, on the other hand, the Hon'ble the Home Minister and other members of the Cabinet take the entire responsibility of such an

illegal action which has no moral justification, then they should explain their conduct to the country how while His Excellency the Governor and the Hon'ble the Home Minister were absent from Calcutta this lawless regulation was put into operation at the moment when the judgment was announced. I think they may say that in view of the impending Japanese invasion this emergent situation has arisen, but the threat of Japanese invasion will not convince us. There is not a soul in India who likes that his hearth and home should be invaded by foreigners whoever they may be. There breathes not a soul who does not desire freedom and liberty of his own motherland. No one in India who has the sense of liberty kindling in his breast ever thinks that the Japanese will help us to win our freedom. Therefore, if the Hon'ble Ministers accept the responsibility of flouting the decision of the highest tribunal of the country, their conduct will be branded as the blackest by their own countrymen. I again appeal to the patriotic sense of the Powers that be in the name of justice and fair-play that they should think over this matter dispassionately and seriously before they oppose the motion. With these few words, I support the motion.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Mr. President, Sir, at the very outset I desire to say that I will not copy the method of my honourable friend Mr. Shrish Chandra Chakraverti who during the last session opposed a resolution moved by me regarding the release of Mahatma Gandhi, Abul Kalam Azad, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and other political leaders. I have much pleasure in supporting his adjournment motion. First, I would appeal to the Hon'ble Sir Nazimuddin, the Home Minister, to give up the idea once and for all of not wasting the rate-payers' money by sending an appeal to the Privy Council. Here is a decision that has been given by the highest courts in the land, the Hon'ble High Court of Calcutta and the Federal Court at Delhi, and he ought to be satisfied with the decision of these Courts. Sir, what these courts have decided goes for the preservation of the liberties of the people. Now, should the Ministry undo it by preferring an appeal against such a decision outside India? If so, Sir Nazimuddin's Government would lend itself to the criticism that it is acting only as the agent of British Imperialism. That would be if it comes to appeal at all, because Sir Nazimuddin has had his training from the bureaucrats, having been in the last Executive Council for a pretty long time before the present Constitution came into being. But, Sir, there has been an intervening period of sixteen months. For sixteen months he was the Leader of the Opposition, and being the Leader of the Opposition he must have gained vast experience. I am sure that that experience had helped him in issuing the statement that he did before he assumed the leadership of the present Ministry. That statement, Sir, was read by many as ushering in a new era, a good era at least, for the release of political prisoners. But so far as that statement goes, a critic observed, as I saw in the papers, that it meant everything, from anything to nothing. But in that statement many found hopes for the release of political prisoners. Now, what has been the result? The present Ministry has been in office for over five months. In the course of these five months there has been a release of

over 200 prisoners only. What is the total number of security prisoners in jail? That is the thing which should be made explicitly clear when the Hon'ble Minister replies. Now, Sir, I put a question during the last session, and on the 7th July the Home Minister gave a reply. My question, Sir, related to the security prisoners who were taken into custody, imprisoned and also restrained in Bengal under the Defence of India Rules. The Hon'ble Sir Nazimuddin replied as follows:—

"Detained in jail under Defence of India Rule

26—criminal security prisoners ...	2,386
Others (meaning non-criminal security prisoners)	1,579"

That was the figure, Sir, as it stood on the 28th February, 1943, and then he went on—

"Restricted under Defence of India Rule 26—

criminals	1,484
Others (meaning non-criminals)	1,698"

That was the figure, Sir, as it stood on the 31st January 1943. Now, there are two distinctions—"detained in jail" and "restricted". The restricted persons are those who are usually confined in their homes and made to appear in the thanas, and sometime, Sir, they are not allowed to come out of their homes between sunset and sunrise. Various other disabilities are also put on the liberties of those prisoners. The number of restricted non-criminals is 1,698, and so far as the number of non-criminals imprisoned in jail is concerned, it is 1,579. That makes the figure over 3,000. So far as criminals are concerned, the figure is over 4,000. So, the total number of persons detained under all the categories under Rule 26 goes up to 7,000. This is the figure which was supplied by Sir Nazimuddin himself. Now, Sir, what is the position? There has been a release of some 200 and odd prisoners only. Having been five months in office, I must say, Sir, this is ridiculously low. I must invite the Hon'ble Minister's attention to what has been done in the Provinces where the Constitution is not working, where section 93 is in operation. I can remind him of this fact that in Bihar in one lump they got out 1,000, and there there were several hundred prisoners following the arrest of the Congress leaders. Then Sir Thomas Rutherford was the Governor of Bihar. I think that the Hon'ble Sir Nazimuddin will agree that there were also questions of sabotage and other things there. The war conditions are still prevailing. The situation in Bengal, so far as the war situation is concerned, is not worse than what it is in Bihar. I should say that the situation here has improved. The people are rendering all assistance towards the war effort. There is especially in Bengal quite a large number of soldiers to defend her. In this view of the fact, an example can be taken from Bihar. Take the example of other Provinces. In Bombay also, releases have been made in large numbers and not in driblets as in Bengal. What are the difficulties in the way of Sir Nazimuddin getting out these people in large numbers.

I would ask him frankly what it is that really stands in his way and that would also lessen his responsibility towards his own constituency. He should also remember one other thing, namely, that he is at the head of a very powerful organisation, namely, the Muslim League, and the Muslim League stands for the Independence of India. He should please not look at the question from a communal point of view. I think he should take courage in both hands and look at the question more liberally and then put his case very strongly before the Governor. In connection with security prisoners I may say that he has got some non-Muslim gentlemen as his colleagues on the Cabinet. It is said that they were tempted to accept office under him because of the rosy picture drawn up by Sir Nasimuddin before he took office as the Chief Minister with regard not only to the question of food but also with regard to the release of political prisoners.

(At this stage the honourable member reached the time-limit and resumed his seat.)

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: I regret that my honourable friend, Alhadj Khan Bahadur Shaikh Muhammad Jan, after delivering a most unjustifiable diatribe against the Muslims of India, who in his opinion are 90 millions in number, has left the Chamber, perhaps realising that the reply that would be given to his remarks would not prove quite pleasant to him. Sir, he delivered a sermon that the nationalist leaders who are in the Congress camp alone really represent the elevated spirit of Islam in India and that the few reactionary self-seekers who pose as leaders only mislead the Muslim masses whose number is 90 millions. He laid the flattering unction to his soul that he was one of the great leaders of the Muslim community of his elevated type. But, Sir, if he had any sense of humour, he would have at once perceived that he had full free play as a member of the——

Mr. PRESIDENT: I think Khan Sahib——

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: All right, Sir. I know that you would raise objection. I anticipated your objection but since you allowed the Khan Bahadur to read out from his manuscript speech all that he had written, I am merely replying to him. Now, Sir, the Khan Bahadur had been a member of the Progressive Coalition Party for 15 months and he had full free play of his flair for emancipating the Muslim masses who were under these reactionary leaders. He was representing a Muslim constituency in the City of Calcutta which was supposed to be in touch with his enlightened patriotism and nationalism but what prevented them from accepting his leadership which was not reactionary leadership? Sir, he acted in such a way that he did not dare to show his face in this Muslim constituency on account of his activities in the Council in the vaunted nationalist cause, when his re-election came on——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Please come to the point and do not indulge in general observations in this way.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: All right, Sir. Therefore, I say that the achievement of this so-called nationalist Muslim leader is such that he cannot

claim any following among the Muslims. He is his own leader and he is his own follower. The thing is this, Sir. I raised a point of order that as the ground covered by the adjournment motion is the same as covered by the non-official resolution as amended by the House, this motion need not be discussed. In that amended resolution also we requested the Government to expedite the release of political prisoners now kept under detention. Now, Sir, my friend Mr. Shrish Chandra Chakraverti has quoted an observation from the judgment of the Honourable Chief Justice that it would be difficult to conceive of a more callous disregard of the provisions of the law....., etc. Well, Sir, it is a salutary principle of British jurisprudence that Judges should be perfectly independent. Judges should express their opinion on matters which are placed before them for adjudication with perfect freedom, without fear or favour. It is a thing of which British Imperialism may very well be proud, in spite of their misdeeds,—and there are misdeeds enough! But a judge is judge. He is not in touch with those affairs with which the administrators have to grapple. Now, Sir, it has got to be borne in mind that neither the High Court nor the Federal Court has said that on the merits of the cases of these persons the detention was wrong. It was only pointed out by the Court that the procedure followed in the matter of detention was wrong and the technicalities prescribed were not observed. Now, Sir, it is unfortunate that these formalities and technicalities were not observed. But there was grave reason which led to the detention of these gentlemen and that reason still persists. My friend Khan Bahadur Muhammad Jan has said that it is disgraceful, it is shameful for a Government to act in this manner; but my friend forgets that it was at the instance of his Progressive Coalition Party Government that this disgraceful, this shameful act was done; that at the instance of his Progressive Coalition Party Government the number of detention swelled from 300 to 1,200. The Progressive Party Ministry was responsible for the detention of 1,200 persons—four times the number that was in detention before, and the Khan Bahadur had the hardihood to say shamelessly, disgracefully, that it is disgraceful——

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA MUKHERJI: Sir, is all this relevant to the debate?

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: It is perfectly relevant. Khan Bahadur Muhammad Jan forgets the action of his Progressive Coalition Ministry. Now, Sir, my point is this: Judges may make observations but the reasons which led to the detention of these persons are still there and nobody regrets them more than the present Government. The formalities were not observed; but there must be strong ground which led the previous Government to put them in jail. These grounds are presumed to be still subsisting and it is that fact which is responsible for their continued detention. And, even so, Sir, the final judicial pronouncement has not yet been made. The Government of Bengal have obtained leave of the Federal Court for filing an appeal before the Privy Council. So the decision of the Federal Court is not the last word of judicial wisdom on the subject. Now, Sir, the position is this: it has been said that the law has not been observed—law has been violated;

but do they ask themselves why these gentlemen took it into their heads to break the law and why their friends indulged in sabotage and other crimes? After all, the safety of the people is a paramount consideration, particularly at the present moment when our province—our motherland—is threatened with an invasion from an implacable and powerful enemy. Because at such a critical time they took it into their heads to show patriotism by having resort to lawlessness, the Government was compelled to take action against them. This is the result of their reckless activities. Many of these persons do not care whether Japanese or Germans come and conquer. In their insensate hatred of the British Government, they forget their own country—in their insensate hatred of the British, they forget that the Japanese would not give us liberty if they are able to conquer India—in their insensate hatred of the British Government, they go to the length of imperilling the safety of their own people. So, Sir, it is only right and proper that they should be detained for the safety of the people and the country. Sir, we have carried a resolution this morning saying that the Government should speed up the process of the release of political prisoners and that they should be generous in granting amenities to these prisoners and their families. The Hon'ble the Home Minister has declared that it is his intention to continually review the cases of these people and to release them consistently with the safety of the country and when the reasons which led to their detention are no longer there. I think this adjournment motion has been moved with a view to censuring the Government which I think the Government does not deserve. I should say that Government deserves appreciation and gratitude of every sensible man who has the love of this country at heart. Whatever this Government is doing, it is doing in the interest of the country as a whole. This fact must not be forgotten. If this Government had not taken action as it has been taking, certainly chaos would be reigning. Therefore, Sir, I do not think that this adjournment motion for the release of the political prisoners and for granting amenities to them and their families is in order and has any justification.

Mr. HAMIDUL HUQ CHOWDHURY: Sir, the scope of the adjournment motion, I submit, is very limited. Extraneous circumstances and arguments have been introduced in the discussion on it but limiting myself, first of all, to the terms of the motion itself, I submit, Sir, that it relates to the cases of 8 persons in respect of whom there has been a decision——

(Several honourable members: No, no.)

Mr. HAMIDUL HUQ CHOWDHURY: My honourable friends on the other side are saying "no, no". There has not been any adjudication as regards the validity of any of the rules. The only decision that has been given by the Federal Court is to the effect that the rules have not been carried into effect. In other words, the rules say that the case of each individual should receive due consideration by the authority which has been provided for in the rules. So far as the Federal Court's decision is concerned, it relates only to 8 prisoners; it does not affect others who have been detained, as my learned friends sitting opposite say. In my opinion, an appeal to the Judicial Committee is not called for at all. It is

not a question of a particular interpretation which the Government of Bengal thinks should be given on the rule. The remedy lies in immediately reviewing these cases, and so far as I understand the policy of the present Government is to fill up the gap which has been left by the last Ministry. In other words, the last Ministry clapped these persons behind the prison bars without considering the case of each person and the present Ministry have undertaken to examine each case and this examination should be made by the proper authorities, as provided for by law; and after the examination if it is seen that any person is wrongfully detained, then he will be released. Two of these eight persons, I understand, have already been released. There is no case for bringing in an adjournment motion for not giving effect to the decision of the Federal Court. My learned friend Mr. Srish Chandra Chakraverti has started by saying that innocent persons are being detained —he means all the persons. There could not be a stronger condemnation of the last Ministry by those who were its supporters at that time. The Government have detained some persons who are alleged to be responsible for bringing disorder in the country, who are likely to prove dangerous to the safety of the Province at a time when the Province is likely to be invaded by a resourceful enemy. According to the last Government, these are the persons who were responsible for such acts, and they have on that ground—either as a pretence or genuine ground—put them into prison, and now my learned friends on the other side say that these grounds are baseless and mere pretences and that those persons are all innocent and so on. Now, whom are they condemning? They are condemning themselves. It was they who allowed the last Ministry to do things in that manner. They then said, "we shall stick on as supporters of the then Ministry despite the fact that innocent persons, patriots, not in dozens but in hundreds, were being put in jail." So far as this Government is concerned, those whom their predecessors have left in their hands, left by my friends of the opposite party, their cases are being examined, and 400 persons have been found to be innocent—persons who should not have been put into jails at all—and they have been released. There remain the cases of 1,100 persons which are being constantly examined, and who according to the present Government are really persons who cannot be set at liberty without endangering the safety of the Province. Therefore, to that extent this Ministry is acting honestly to its own conviction as opposed to what has been done by the last Ministry. My friends have repeatedly asked the Ministers whether or not they are being over-ruled by the Government officials and by the Governor and, if so, then a certain conduct is being prescribed for them. But, Sir, the conduct which they are now prescribing for the Government is a course which they themselves have not followed. So far as the present Government is concerned, they are acting honestly as opposed to the past Government. They are acting with a full consciousness of their own responsibility to those persons who have been put in jail and are continuously reviewing their cases to see that not one person is detained whose detention is not needed for the safety of the Province. Then, with regard to the undertaking given by the Chief Minister to the Province, when he assumed office, that he will see that everything is done to give relief to those persons who

have been detained, it has been carried out. He has released large numbers already, and he has succeeded in giving them amenities on a more liberal scale than were given to them before this Government assumed office. I think their allowances have been increased by 50 per cent. (An honourable member: Not paid as yet.) Still when the Government has passed the order, it is certain to be carried out. It is now only a question of carrying out the order and paying the money. But even then, the credit for this order is not due to those gentlemen who are moving this resolution, those who were responsible for keeping the past Ministry in office. Therefore, Sir, the Chief Minister has carried out his promise.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Pleading their powerlessness!

Mr. HAMIDUL HUQ CHOWDHURY: There is no question of pleading their powerlessness. It is the last Ministry which used to take shelter behind such nonsense. This Ministry has got the power and therefore they passed the order. The question that is now asked is: when the allowance is going to be paid. I, of course, do not know if any allowance has remained unpaid; I do not know what authority the honourable member has for saying that all the 1,200 prisoners have not received their allowances; it may be that some of them have not yet received their allowances but in due course there is no doubt that they will get.

Sir, Khan Bahadur Muhammad Jan has thought it fit to leave the Chamber after putting on record some statement which should not, however, be allowed to go unchallenged. He came here to give vent to his resentment against the Muslim League and he has reasons for doing so, reasons which I need not divulge but I can say that he has tried to justify his political somersault.

(At this stage the honourable member reached the time-limit and resumed his seat.)

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MAHALANOBIS: Mr. President, Sir, the issue before the House is: whether or not the Government has failed to carry out the order or spirit of the order that was passed by the High Court and the Federal Court. It is not disputed that the Federal Court has held that the detention of certain prisoners was illegal. It has been contended that the case before the Federal Court was limited only to eight persons. I think it should be nine. The point that was, however, discussed in the judgments of Their Lordships of the Federal Court clearly indicates that the Government of Bengal have failed to perform the obvious duty which lay upon them for the purpose of passing a valid detention order with regard to those people and the affidavits sworn before the Honourable High Court of Calcutta on either side would also go to show that the person who was legally authorised to scrutinise the reports and pass the necessary orders did not pay his personal attention to those facts and that the order that was passed was passed by a person who was really not authorised to pass it. Now, the question therefore is not with regard to the eight or nine persons involved in the appeal before the Federal Court; but the question is the

policy that has been pursued by the Government, whether the present Ministry was in power or whether the past Ministry was in power—then that question seems to me to be absolutely irrelevant. The only question before the House is: whether the detention order has been made legally and as the highest court in the land says that it was not and as it is perfectly clear that thousands of people have been detained without adopting the proper procedure, without giving the person who alone has the right to decide whether a man should be detained without trial, I should say that those detentions should be regarded as illegal and improper and no Government should take recourse to flimsy excuses by saying that these judgments of the High Court and the Federal Court refer only to eight or nine persons. As a general principle, the observations of Their Lordships cover the whole ground. It is perfectly clear from the affidavit of Mr. Porter in the High Court that the case did not go to His Excellency the Governor at all, and therefore it is a question between carrying into effect the judgment of the Federal Court and the question of Government insisting on carrying out their whims irrespective of the decision of the highest court of law in India. That is the issue before this House. My submission is this: that in all decency the judgment of the Federal Court should have been given effect to and these persons at once released. It is idle to contend that these people, if released, would upset the British Raj in a few days. The matter could have been legalised: individual cases should have been examined and then the legal procedure followed and if they had been found guilty, they should have been put into jail. But why do you insist on detaining people improperly in spite of the fact that your illegality and impropriety have been taken notice of by the highest court in the land? This seems to be an unseemly struggle between the Judiciary and the Executive which is only possible in this unfortunate country. In England if such a judgment were pronounced by the High Court, no Government there would have hesitated for a moment to release those people who were detained improperly and illegally. I submit, Sir, that technically it would amount to a case of wrongful confinement. I do not think that the provision of the Defence of India Act would come in to protect the Government after the declaration of the Federal Court. Therefore, I submit that this House should only consider whether there has been a case of illegal detention, and we do not think that there is any doubt about it. The plea that Government is going to file an appeal before the Privy Council is absolutely irrelevant as the Hon'ble Chief Justice Sir Harold Derbyshire said in one of his judgments that even if there were an appeal that would not matter in the least as to the law that has to be applied in British India and until and unless the judgment of the Federal Court was set aside, that is the law. You as Government are bound to act according to the law. Section 210 of the Government of India Act, 1935, clearly enjoins you to follow the law that is laid down by the Federal Court. If you do not do it you are guilty of contempt of the Federal Court.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Mr. President, Sir, it seems to me that a good deal of irrelevant matter has been introduced into the debate today, and at times we have forgotten the issue which we are discussing here and

entered into a diatribe for or against the Muslim League. I cannot help remarking that it is my honourable friend Khan Sahib Abul Quasem who always introduces a degree of heat and temper into his speech and disturbs the equanimity of an otherwise quiet House. Before I deal with his speech I propose to pay some attention to the judicial pronouncement of Mr. Hamidul Huq Chowdhury. Mr. Chowdhury generally attempts to retain some detachment in his discussions and even today he did not altogether fail in that attempt. I would submit, however, that his speech today was a tissue of conflicting statements. He has not clarified in his own mind what he wants. The first view he took was that this question should be discussed purely on a technical plane and on points of law. Then he entered into a defence of the action of the present Government in detaining the persons who have actually been detained on certain alleged grounds of expediency. If he took his stand only on the question as to whether the order passed was legal or illegal, I would have understood him. If he on the other hand stood only upon grounds of expedience, I could also have understood him. In fact, he did neither but mixed up the two. My honourable friend Mr. Mohalanabis has made it perfectly clear that after the judgment of the Federal Court, Government have no ground to stand upon in detaining the persons who had been arrested under Rule 26 of the Defence of India Rules till it has been proved that the Governor or the Minister to whom the matter was referred has actually passed an order after applying his individual judgment and decided that the persons were proper persons to be detained under Rule of the Defence of India Rules. I suggest to my honourable friend Mr. Hamidul Huq Chowdhury that he is taking a very callous attitude by saying that it is a case of only 8 or 9 persons who have actually filed petitions in the High Court and the Federal Court. I also suggest to him that Government have not taken up the case for their release. My friend has said that nobody should be released till the case is decided on appeal. This may be desirable from the point of view of a lawyer but from the point of view of a politician, from the point of view of a legislator, from the point of view of persons who look to the interests of the country, and from the point of view of those who are interested in the rights of individual citizens, this is not right and proper. I therefore submit, Sir, that the whole speech of my honourable friend Mr. Hamidul Huq Chowdhury is torn between two conflicting tendencies. If he stands on law, he has no ground to stand upon. If he says that the detention of these persons was justified on account of the general political situation in the country, he should have entered into a wider field and on that question also I shall have certain remarks to make.

With regard to my honourable friend Khan Sahib Abul Quasem, his contention that this Government has done all that could be done, his contention that this Government deserves commendation and not condemnation for what they have done, cannot be justified. I had occasion to point this out when discussing another resolution. I had then occasion to point out before the House that the amendment of the honourable member was itself ample criticism. The amendment of my honourable friend pressed upon Government to expedite the release of such political prisoners, thereby admitting by implication that Government have not been sufficiently

expeditious in the matter of release of these prisoners or in the matter of granting further amenities to them and their families. Sir, when this question was debated again today, I was unable to be present in the House. I would otherwise have dealt at some greater detail with the point which has been raised in regard to the general question of release of political prisoners.

The question today concerns the release of persons who have been detained under section 26 which has been held to be illegal both by the Calcutta High Court and by the Federal Court, and I submit that the Hon'ble the Home Minister has no justification in further detaining them. Till this decree has been upset by an appeal to the Privy Council, if at all he chooses to make an appeal, the decision of the High Court is binding upon Government. I know, Sir, the answer which will be given by my honourable friend the Chief Minister of the Province. He has in fact tried to answer these points in another place. The arguments which he advanced was that if these persons are not detained, the war effort of the Province will be seriously hampered. He has also used another argument, an argument used by him, and repeated by his supporters like my friends Mr. Abul Quasem and Mr. Hamidul Huq Chowdhury. They say that at the time the last Ministry took office, the number of security prisoners was only about 300 or thereabout and at the time they went out of office and the present Government was formed, this number increased to 1,500. This is a specious argument. I had occasion to point out that this argument overlooks the fact that since the last Ministry took office, a tremendous change has come over the country, a stupendous political wave swept over the length and breadth of the country and created a situation which was unprecedented in the history of British connection with India. At that time, I suggested that if instead of the last Government, the present Government had been in power, who knows that in place of 1,500, 15,000 people would not have been imprisoned, 15,000 would not have been condemned? I submit, Sir, that this juggling with figures will not do. The conditions were different, and even then we, who were the supporters of the then Government, continually pressed upon that Government to release every person against whom definite and conclusive proof was not advanced. Therefore, it does not lie in the mouth of Sir Nazimuddin or his supporters to say that simply because the last Government arrested a few persons in addition to those who had been detained previously, therefore the present Government is justified in doing whatever it wishes. That, I submit Sir, is a very curious argument. Simply because the last Government arrested a few more persons, it does not mean that the present Government may go on merrily and need not take steps towards release, especially in view of the changed situation. There is no doubt whatsoever that we in Bengal are today placed in a position quite different from what it was in August, 1942. I would submit, Sir, that there has been not only a great deterioration in the economic situation today but the political and the international situation has been transformed almost beyond recognition. Last year in August, 1942, at one time it seemed that in the mighty clash that was taking place between different forces, the issue was uncertain. At that time there might have been some justification, I do not say that there

was justification, I say there *might* have been some justification for Government to take the action which it actually took. But today the situation is altogether changed with the defence of India on a much stronger basis. We need those people who are in jail today if we want to tackle the economic crisis with which we are faced. We need the workers in jail who can bring relief to those who need succour and relief; we need them to give lead to the country in order to save thousands, perhaps millions, who are facing starvation and worse than starvation. At such a time I submit, Sir, that any Government which claims to be a popular Government, any Government which claims to be the representative of the people, has no justification whatsoever in detaining people in prisons who can come out and help in the restoration of the economic life of the Province. Therefore, Sir, this change in the international situation places an obligation on the present Government —which did not exist at that time—and I think that this change in the international situation has been recognised everywhere outside Bengal. Why is it that we find that even in the section 93 Provinces where there is no popular Ministry functioning, where the bureaucracy is responsible for the Government, where there is no representative institution functioning, larger numbers of political prisoners have been released than is the case in Bengal? Why is it that in Bihar, the storm-centre of the movement of August, 1942, a larger number of political prisoners have been released than in Bengal? I think, Sir, this change in the international situation places an obligation upon the present Government to review the whole situation, to survey the present position and to order the release of such persons against whom no conclusive evidence is forthcoming. And if the present Government fails in performing that function, I submit that it will be failing in its duty, in the pledge which the Hon'ble Chief Minister gave to the province at the time of assumption of office. I think it will be failing in its duty to the party which it represents, and I think that the other colleagues of the Hon'ble Chief Minister who have accepted office with him on a definite programme and pledge, they will also be failing not only to their party and to the country but they will have no justification even to themselves if they just cling to that office which they somehow managed to occupy. Therefore, I submit the international and the internal situation also places an obligation on the present Government——

(Here the honourable member reached the time-limit and resumed his seat.)

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA MUKHERJEE: Sir, I rise to support the motion that has been moved by my friend Mr. Shrish Chandra Chakraverti and am sorry that a good deal of irrelevancy has crept into the discussion this morning with regard to this very simple resolution. I would, therefore, like to draw the attention of the honourable members to the operative part of the resolution which runs thus: the failure of the Government of Bengal to set at liberty persons purported to have been detained under Rule 26 of the Defence of India Rules, in spite of the decision of the Calcutta High Court and the recent decision of the Federal Court of India, declaring the procedure adopted by the Bengal Government regarding detention as

contrary to law and improper. Now, Sir, it has been contended that the judgment of the Federal Court applies only to the nine persons with regard to whom the Federal Court had to consider the question. My learned friend who put forward this contention possibly forgot that the Federal Court condemned the procedure adopted by the Bengal Government in detaining these persons, persons whose cases were brought before the Federal Court, and the procedure they had to consider was the procedure which they stated was to be followed in consequence of the Ordinance which was promulgated two days after the Federal Court declared that Rule 26 itself and Rule 129 were *ultra vires*. I may as well give the dates. On the 22nd April, 1943, the Federal Court in the case of Keshab Talpade decided that Rule 26 was *ultra vires* of the Legislature. Two days after that on the 24th April, there were certain *habeas corpus* applications moved in the Honourable High Court with regard to persons who had been detained under rule 26, for their release. Ordinance XIV of 1943 was promulgated on the 28th April, 1943, that is four days after the rule was issued by the High Court with regard to the release of these persons. Therefore, in the first place, I would invite the attention of honourable members to the decision of the Federal Court where they say that Rule 26 as promulgated and as enacted by the Government of India was *ultra vires* of the Legislature. Honourable members will remember that the detention of Mr. Keshab Talpade was made some time after August, 1942, and the persons whose cases we are now considering were also detained under the same rule. Now, with regard to these persons the order which was promulgated in the case of Keshab Talpade was in the same form as the order under Rule 26 which was passed in the case of the security prisoners whose cases we are now considering. The order was in these terms:—"Whereas the person known as——is detained in jail and whereas the Governor has been satisfied that with a view to preventing certain persons from acting in a manner prejudicial to the defence of British India, public safety, maintenance of public order and for the prosecution of the war it is necessary to make a further order to continue the detention." I need not read the other portions of the order. Honourable members will understand that the detention of Keshab Talpade under Rule 26, as in the case of the persons whom we are considering, was held by the Federal Court as *ultra vires*. Rule 26 has been declared by the Federal Court as *ultra vires*. I am not going into the judgment of the High Court in detail. But I am simply showing that the High Court has held that the procedure adopted by the Government of Bengal with regard to the detention of these persons was *ultra vires*. So far as the procedure adopted is concerned, it applies to the cases of all the persons who were detained under Rule 26. That is a point which has been made clear in the affidavit of Mr. Porter. It was placed before the High Court and the High Court said on the basis thereof that the detentions were illegal and the Federal Court upheld the decision of the High Court that the procedure was illegal. The effect of that is that more than a thousand persons have been detained in jail illegally. The Hon'ble the Home Minister said that the case of each individual person is being examined by Government for release gradually. In reply to this I may say that it is not a question of gradual release but it is a question of release of the persons

en bloc, because the procedure under which they have been detained has been declared illegal by the Federal Court. These persons should be set at liberty at once and then each case has to be examined following the proper procedure and if as a result of the examination anybody is found guilty, then he should be kept under detention. But it is not right to cast a vague aspersion and say that for the safety of the country they should be detained, because the Japanese are coming—because these persons are considered to be dangerous in the present war situation. In accordance with the decision of the Federal Court these persons should be set at liberty *en bloc* and then each case should be taken up, one by one, and considered whether they are within the mischief of the Rules and then they should be detained in accordance with the procedure that has to be followed according to the decision of the Federal Court. It is not a question of waiting for the filing of appeal to the Privy Council and saying that these persons are not going to be released. It is a question of fact whether you have followed the procedure laid down by the judgment of the High Court and the Federal Court. It is a question of fact that you have not followed the procedure laid down by these courts and it has been found that the proper procedure has not been followed. There is no question of interpretation and there is no question of principle here. The fact is that the procedure laid down by the highest court in India has not been followed. It is no good wasting money over preferring an appeal to the Privy Council when we are faced with a deficit of Rs. 7 crores. These persons should be released wholesale. You may then consider each case, if they are to be detained. With these words, I support the motion that has been moved.

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: Sir, this motion deals with a subject in which a very large section of the people of the province is interested and its seriousness and importance cannot be denied. I hope that the newspapers will publish the speeches that have been delivered in support of as well as in opposition to this motion. I feel that it is necessary that the people should know what is the true position; not only the people but the security prisoners themselves who are in detention and in jail should also know. Sir, I would appeal to my honourable friends Mr. Shrish Chandra Chakraverti, Khan Bahadur Shaikh Muhammad Jan, Mr. Haridas Mazumdar, Mr. Lalit Chandra Das and others who have made speeches today to kindly reconsider the contents of their speeches when they go home. I do not take very serious exception to the language used, nor to the adjectives used about the Ministers. Sir, I would particularly like to point out that so far as the security prisoners are concerned, 75 per cent. of them had not been put under detention by bureaucrats like Sir William Prentice, Sir Robert Reid and Sir Nazimuddin, who is referred to as having had training under bureaucratic government, but by patriotic political heroes and Ministers belonging to the parties of Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose, Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose and the great leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, Dr. Syamaprasad Mookerjee, as well as by Ministers belonging to the Krishak Proja Party of which Mr. Humayun Kabir is a prominent member, supported by the great National Congress Party of Bengal. Sir, these points must be remembered. I will deal with the

relevancy of all these—my honourable friend Mr. Mohalanabis and others have questioned its relevancy—at a later stage. But, Sir, these adjectives have been used—I have got one or two words written down, viz., reactionary, selfish and others—from time immemorial against, as I said, Sir William Prentice, Sir Robert Reid and my humble self. Sir, they forget that these persons have not been sent to jail by them but that they have been sent there by the representatives of the people, by the leaders of nationalist parties. As a matter of fact, 75 per cent. of these prisoners are being detained under their orders. These facts, Sir, must be borne in mind and must not be lost sight of. It is no use crying now that they are innocent, that they have been wrongfully detained in jail. If they have been wrongfully detained, then it is their own people who have done so. Then, Sir, I maintain that the people belonging to the nationalist parties are responsible for it. I maintain that the Government has got a responsibility for the safety of the province The safety of the people of the province dominates all other considerations. If these people have been sent to jail, it was because their liberty was considered to be dangerous to the State. Those who are clamouring for their release must show that things have changed. I know that Mr. Humayun Kabir in his usual style has tried to find out an argument, and I will deal with that later on. But, Sir, we who have the responsibility of Government on our shoulders have got to see whether these persons can be released at the present time. That is the question we have got to answer, and we feel that it will not be safe to let these people go. As far as the legal aspect of the question is concerned, I think Mr. Hamidul Huq Chowdhury has dealt with it very effectively. The decision of the Federal Court, strictly speaking, applies only to the cases of the eight persons whose appeals were before them, and what is more, if I may submit, they deliberately refused to express an opinion on the provisions of section 2 of Ordinance XIV. Therefore, as far as we have been advised, the detention of the remaining persons is not illegal. We are going to prefer an appeal. We have prepared the brief, and every step that is possible is being taken to expedite the filing of an appeal in England. We are prepared to send up all applications that are made for *Habeas Corpus* before the High Court. We are prepared to give legal facilities to those who want to move such applications. We are prepared to give all facilities to them to meet their lawyers and have consultation with them. Over and above that, we are taking steps to rectify the defects in the procedure, if any, that might have crept in the past. As has been rightly pointed out by Khan Sahib Abul Quasem, the Courts have not said that on merits the detentions were wrong; but what they have said is that the procedure followed was technically not correct.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Then release them.

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: No country that enjoys freedom would have set at liberty persons whom they consider to be a menace to the safety of the State at a time like this when the province is threatened with foreign invasion. If there are technical flaws, they should be rectified. That is what we are doing. Sir, I would again ask the

members opposite to realise that there is a great responsibility on the shoulders of Government. It is not now the case of mere terrorism, of shooting of individuals, rightly or wrongly. These persons who are detained have taken it into their heads that this is the opportune moment for taking steps to secure freedom for their country——

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: How do you say that?

(Cries of "How do you know?") Well, Sir, what is the use of saying "How do you know?". Otherwise so many people, as many as 1,200 and not simply one or two, would not be put under detention. The other side must be prepared either to admit that every one of these 1,200 men was innocent or that they were guilty of activities which justified their detention at the time. It is no use saying how we know that their activities were subversive of the peace of the country. I cannot understand how responsible Ministers of Government who knew every one of these 1,200 persons to be innocent would allow them to be detained without trial, without making an effective protest.

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA MUKHERJEE: On a point of order, Sir. The question is whether the procedure adopted by the Local Government is legal.

Mr. PRESIDENT: That is not a point of order.

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: Well, Sir, so far as legal opinion is concerned, my friends know very well that lawyers constantly differ from one another in their interpretation and you can get two opinions even from the same lawyer. Our legal advisers, who hold most eminent positions in the Bar, are of the opinion that the detention is not illegal. There must have been some reasons for putting these men away, and I think my honourable friends on the other side must admit that,—they cannot simply run away from this position—and if the detentions were justified then, they are no less justified today; for in spite of whatever my friend Mr. Humayun Kabir may say or may have said to the contrary, the situation has not changed. We were hoping that the situation would change to such an extent that I would be able to implement the promise I gave on assuming office, that releases of political prisoners would be much more quick and on a larger scale. But unfortunately the situation has deteriorated since that time. May I remind Mr. Kabir that we were hoping that Akyab would be in our hands in April last and that we were also hoping that our advance to Burma would be much faster than is actually taking place. So, actually there has been a marked deterioration in the situation since this Ministry took office. Since then honourable members who listen to Saigon and other stations are aware that constant propaganda is going on from those stations and hopes are being given of the likelihood of an invasion of Bengal from there. I personally believe that this is done and done deliberately not with a view to encourage the idea of invasion but to incite and instigate these people to commit sabotage just for the purpose of obstructing our plans of invasion, and also to induce a belief in these people that the enemy will be coming. That was the way in which

Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose was acting when he was in Germany and this time too he is doing so again. Therefore, I want the members in the Opposition who are agitating for the release of security prisoners to realise the likely consequences of their release. I may be wrong and they may be right, but the question is whether we can justify the taking of this risk that is involved in their release. (Cries of "What risk?") Sir, the risk is the likelihood of an invasion and the risk of the country being devastated. As Khan Sahib Abul Quasem has said, do not think in terms of British Imperialism but think of your province, think of your hearth and home, kith and kin; and taking all these into consideration, release whether it would be proper for you to risk it, whether it is just and proper to take the risk in this matter. As I said before, I have had occasion not only of looking into the cases of these persons and discussing with the Intelligence Branch officers, but I have also discussed this question intimately with the leaders of the parties when they were at large. When these persons were released, I had long and intimate conversation with them and as a result I came to the conclusion that the position is the same as before. I am satisfied that their activities were such that we cannot take the risk of releasing them wholesale. It may be remembered that even when the war was declared, these people were not arrested; but when the Japanese attack began and the situation in the East deteriorated, then and then alone Government started arresting them; and when there was a threatened invasion by the Japanese, we thought that it was not safe to allow these men to continue their activities. Indeed, the reports of their activities were such that they could not be kept at liberty: they were the people who worked underground, who were trying to organise the work of sabotage. Although I do not think that they themselves do these acts of sabotage, they are the people who keep information, who were trying to organise these acts and were getting various parties to come together. Now, Sir, with regard to the Communist Party, the leaders of this party were working underground after two years of the declaration of the war: they were absconders. But once we were satisfied that they were no longer going to endanger public safety and tranquillity and were not a bar to the maintenance of law and order, we released every one of them. Muzaffar Ahmed and Som Nath Lahiri were absconding and were underground but as soon as we were satisfied that they were not a danger to the State, they were released. Those who have got a responsibility for the safety of the province and the people have got to make sure that the persons in detention will act according to their declaration. Mere declaration will not do. You must have something more positive, more tangible proof that they would not be a danger to the State. Whenever we are satisfied, whenever we feel that we can safely release these persons, we will most certainly do so. I can give this assurance to the House that if I am honestly convinced that a particular individual should be released, I shall immediately take steps for his release. Therefore, I would ask the members of this House to realise their responsibility and not to look at this question from a narrow political point of view. After all, I can assure you that the persons who are detained understand politics and understand every movement and will be a danger to the safety of the

province, if released. So they are not to be released. We have found Dr. Syamaprasad Mookerjee in his open letter to the Governor making one of the conditions the release of the political prisoners just for the purpose of currying favour with them. He was in office when the largest number of persons were detained. As I have already said, I have discussed the matter with the detenus and I can assure the House that most of their demands have been met.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: Mr. President, Sir, the first point that Sir Nazimuddin wants to make out is that it was the case of only 8 persons but it is not so if he will go through the judgment properly. Justices Varadachari and Zafrulla held that all orders passed under rule 26 were bad and so also was the opinion of the Chief Justice. The detentions made after the 1st of October, 1942, were also held invalid. So it is not a question of 8 persons only. Therefore, the cases went up on appeal before the Federal Court. Next, he refers to the support of the Congress. With regard to this, I want to submit that the Congress Party never lent any support either in the matter of arrests or anything like that to the last Ministry. If Sir Nazimuddin will refresh his memory he will see that when an attempt was made to practically turn out of the Ministry in an unconstitutional manner, then and then only the Congress exercised their own discretion of vote. Another point is this that we have not made any political capital out of the matter of Ministry-making, as he knows very well that we are not going to partake in the loaves and fishes of the Ministry. So if Sir Nazimuddin levels any charge against us that we were responsible in any way for bringing about the situation, it will be certainly quite unfair on his part to do so. Next, Sir Nazimuddin has expressed that certain adjectives have been used against him which are degoratory to his position as Minister. With regard to this charge I may submit that I have not personally used in my speech anything like that. I am the last person to make any personal aspersion against any person. I only criticized the action of the Ministers and also the policy and the principle which have guided them in the discharge of their duties. As for the legality or the moral justification which Sir Nazimuddin wants to make out for the detention of these prisoners, he says it is for the safety of the province. Of course, this is a very happy and a very serviceable phrase which any administrator of any country can take recourse to. It is very difficult to question that, because it is he who wants to judge of the justification on the material before him of which the public are absolutely ignorant. So the question of justification which he wants to make out cannot always convince the persons who are not in the know of the facts, and who have got nothing to do directly with the Government. Only for that reason, to show that the Government is absolutely fair in its treatment of the political prisoners and that their attitude and policy have been absolutely *bona fide*, we ask him to take us into confidence. It was suggested that an all party committee may be formed out of members of the Legislature to go into this matter. Sir Nazimuddin knows that while he was Home Minister in 1937, a committee like that was formed over which probably he was to preside. So, I

think that if he concedes to forming such a committee, it will not in any way be treated as an abdication of the powers of Government. But for reasons best known to him he refused to take recourse to such a procedure. He said that he will give facilities for the defence of the prisoners, but they do not know under what charges they have been detained. We may say—we can only guess and presume that they may have been arrested probably for the offence of sabotage or for alleged connection with this or that movement; but it has never been said in so many words, and it has never been put in black and white. If the Hon'ble Minister contends that particularly for the offence of sabotage or some similar offence they have been arrested, I may ask, is that the way to bring them to their senses? I cannot congratulate the Hon'ble Sir Nazimuddin or the Governor or any higher authority over him on their decision that by doing this they will make the country more safe and more secure; rather by doing this they are driving the discontent of the people underground. And this underground discontent of the people might burst in a form which the bayonets of British Imperialism probably will not be able to quell. That is why, knowing the situation in India and for helping the war effort and the defence of the country, the Indian National Congress requested the British Imperialism to conciliate the people and take their co-operation, and for that purpose they were willing to do everything; but this offer was spurned at.

Adjournment.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. The debate on the motion is closed as the two hours' limit has been reached. The House stands adjourned till 9 a.m. on Monday, the 20th September, 1943.

Members absent.

The following members were absent from the meeting held on the 17th September, 1943:—

(1) Khan Bahadur Naziruddin Ahmad.

(2) Mr. N. C. Datta.

(3) Mr. K. K. Dutta.

(4) Mr. R. W. N. Ferguson.

(5) Mr. Mohamed Hossain.

(6) Maulana Muhammad Akrum Khan.

(7) Mr. R. Pal Choudhuri.

(8) Mr. R. S. Purssell.

(9) Khan Bahadur Kazi Abdur Rashid.

(10) Dr. K. S. Ray.

(11) Dr. Kasiruddin Talukdar.

BGP 4314-6391A-750

BENGAL LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DEBATES

Third Session, 1943—No. 3.

THE COUNCIL met in the Legislative Chamber of the Legislative Building, Calcutta, on Monday, the 20th September, 1943, at 9 a.m., being the third sitting of the Third Session of 1943, pursuant to section 62(2)(*a*) of the Government of India Act, 1935.

Mr. President (the Hon'ble Sir BIJOY PRASAD SINGH ROY, K.C.I.E.) was in the Chair.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Tube-wells in Calcutta.

23. Khan Sahib NURUL AMIN: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Public Health and Local Self-Government Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) the number of tube-wells sunk in Calcutta under the supervision of the Chief Engineer, Public Health Department, as A.R.P. measure in 1941;

(*b*) the number of contracts for such tube-wells given to Muslim and Hindu contractors (to be shown separately);

(*c*) the number of contracts for tube-wells distributed this year amongst Hindu and Muslim contractors respectively;

(*d*) whether the Government consider the desirability of giving 50 per cent. of such contracts to Muslim contractors; and

(*e*) if the answer to part (*d*) be in the affirmative, whether the Government propose to issue a circular to that effect?

MINISTER in charge of the PUBLIC HEALTH and LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi Jalaluddin Ahmad): (*a*) 2,496.

(*b*) Hindus	...	9
Muslims	...	2
Sikh	...	1
(*c*) Hindus	...	6
Muslim	...	1

(*d*) Yes, it will be considered.

(*e*) This will also be considered in due course.

Khan Sahib NURUL AMIN: With reference to (*c*) and (*d*), will the Hon'ble Minister please state how many tube-wells were allotted to Hindu contractors and how many to Muslim contractors?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi JALALUDDIN AHMAD: I want notice.

Grow More Food campaign.

24. Mr. NUR AHMED: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Agriculture Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) what is the total expenditure incurred on the "Grow More Food" campaign in Bengal in the year 1941-42, up to the month of February, 1942-43, and of this, how much was spent from the Provincial revenues and how much from the grant made by Government of India;

(*b*) what specific measures were adopted by the Government of Bengal in furtherance of their campaign of "Grow More Food" in Bengal;

(*c*) what is the total acreage of extra land which has been newly brought under cultivation in Bengal as a result of the "Grow More Food" campaign;

(*d*) whether any improved seeds and manures were distributed by the Government of Bengal to cultivators;

(*e*) if so, in what districts and places, and how much in each district:

(*f*) if the Government propose to continue its campaign of "Grow More Food" in the financial year 1943-44; and

(*g*) if so, in what shape and manner?

MINISTER in charge of the AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Saiyed Muazzamuddin Hosain): (*a*) The "Grow More Food" campaign was not started in 1941-42. It was started in 1942-43, and the expenditure on the "Grow More Food" campaign up to February, 1943, is Rs. 15,02,835. The entire amount was met from the Provincial budget.

(*b*) A food production committee was formed to advise Government on the various aspects of the subject. Similar committees were formed in each district and in subdivisions, thanas and union boards in most of the districts. A Special Officer was appointed to prepare propaganda materials to co-ordinate and consolidate the propaganda and to advise the district officers about it. With a view to increasing the acreage under food crops the following schemes were brought under operation during the year:—

(*i*) Scheme for the distribution of *aman* paddy seeds.

(*ii*) Scheme for the distribution of *rabi* crops.

(*iii*) Scheme for the distribution of *aus* paddy seeds.

(*iv*) Scheme for the distribution of English vegetable seeds.

(*v*) Scheme for the distribution of 261 lakhs sugarcane cuttings among the sugarcane growers.

(*vi*) Scheme for the distribution of potato seeds.

(*c*) The figure is not readily available; but arrangements will be made for collection of such figures in the current year.

(*d*) Yes. As at (*b*) so far as seed is concerned about 3,997 and 3,751 maunds of fertilisers were distributed to the Union Board Farms and Demonstration Centres in the Province during the years 1941-42 and 1942-43, respectively.

(*e*) Two statements, one for quantity of paddy and the other for *rabi* seeds, are placed on the Table.

(*f*) Yes.

(*g*) The campaign is proposed to be carried on more vigorously in the current year. Besides distribution of seeds the campaign will embrace (1) a desperate attempt for reclaiming culturable waste lands of Bengal of which the aggregate area is 37·25 lakh acres, (2) an attempt to increase area under more than one crop, (3) an attempt to increase the yield by using manures and water-hyacinth compost more extensively.

Statement referred to in reply to question No. 24, showing, district by district, the total quantity of paddy distributed in 1942.

District.	Quanity distributed.	
	Md.	sr.
Nadia	1,080	23
Murshidabad	5,372	33
Jessore	12,500	0
Khulna	6,017	28
Burdwan	8,234	1
Birbhum	9,070	20
Bankura	15,497	26
Midnapore	8,996	15
Hooghly	6,088	20
Howrah	6,965	14
Rajshahi	5,968	5
Dinajpur	8,971	30
Jalpaiguri	5,032	36
Rangpur	12,793	0
Bogra	4,882	8
Pabna	12	30
Malda	5,103	36
Dacca	13,711	36
Mymensingh	27,689	24
Faridpur	1,598	30
Bakarganj	13,259	6
Tippera	9,911	16
Noakhali	9,095	20
Total	197,854	17

Statement referred to in reply to question No. 24, showing distribution of rabi seeds in different districts of Bengal on Sowoi system.

Districts.	Mustard.			Lentil.			Gram.		
	Md.	sr.	ch.	Md.	sr.	ch.	Md.	sr.	ch
Nadia .. .	102	30	0	1,169	38	4	1,347	37	0
Murshidabad .. .	23	32	4	1,014	3	14	1,370	39	8
Jessore .. .	59	26	0	506	29	8	176	18	0
Khulna .. .	98	3	4	349	39	8	175	31	12
Burdwan .. .	18	4	8	86	30	0	193	6	0
Birbhum .. .	....			40	0	0	196	0	0
Bankura .. .	48	16	0	52	30	0	83	32	0
Midnapore .. .	17	26	8	16	35	0	74	31	12
Hooghly .. .	....			98	0	0	270	0	0
Howrah .. .	....			179	19	0	79	31	8
Rajshahi .. .	244	2	0	453	0	0	485	35	4
Dinajpur .. .	169	30	0	146	39	8	46	0	0
Jalpaiguri .. .	301	0	8	210	30	0	....		
Rangpur .. .	564	5	6	175	39	10	49	38	8
Bogra .. .	197	10	2	99	2	0	197	36	12
Pabna .. .	244	14	0	445	33	0	437	16	8
Malda .. .	119	38	8	199	35	4	256	1	8
Dacca .. .	369	13	0	464	0	0	310	25	0
Mymensingh .. .	628	14	8	506	8	8	363	33	8
Faridpur .. .	368	27	8	690	10	0	414	17	4
Bakarganj .. .	99	15	0	239	38	0	128	22	0
Chittagong .. .	66	2	8	90	29	0	6	29	0
Tippera .. .	224	11	0	285	12	0	226	0	8
Noakhali .. .	145	19	0	339	26	8	186	19	12
	Md.	sr.	ch.	Md.	sr.	ch.	Md.	sr.	ch.
Total number of seeds distributed ..	4,110	21	8	+7,862	8	8	+7,078	23	0	=19,051	13	0
	Rs.	a.	p.	Rs.	a.	p.	Rs.	a.	p.	Rs.	a.	p.
Total cost of seeds including incidental charges ..	34,680	3	0	+52,017	6	9	+52,738	14	6	=1,39,436	8	3

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUDMAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state who are the members of the Food Production Committee?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: I want notice.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state what is the pay of the Special Officer who has been appointed to prepare propaganda materials and other work?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: For pay also, I want notice.

Mr. KRISHNA CHANDRA ROY CHOWDHURY: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state why the district of 24-Parganas was left out from the list?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: I cannot say, because this refers to things done before the present Ministry came to office.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state why Chittagong was left out from the list of paddy distribution.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: The same reply also holds good, namely, it was done during the period of the last Ministry, before February last.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Arising out of (*d*), will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if any amount of fertilisers were distributed to the Chittagong Union Board Farms?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: I want notice.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if it is the contention of the Hon'ble Minister that whatever had been left over by the last Ministry would not be attended to by them?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: Certainly not; but the reason for the action of the last Ministry cannot be given by the present Ministry.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if he is aware that the *aman* paddy seeds and *aus* paddy seeds supplied to the various districts fall far short of the needs of the districts?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: Is it for the present year or last year?

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: On the basis of the figures supplied, is the Hon'ble Minister aware that this supply is quite insufficient for the purpose?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: Sir, I want to know whether the honourable member refers to this year's supply or last year's supply.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Mazumdar, it is very difficult for the Hon'ble Minister to reply to your question unless you make it clear whether you want information regarding this year's supply or last year's supply.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: This year also, if the Hon'ble Minister is agreeable to that.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Put your supplementary question.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Is the Hon'ble Minister aware that the paddy seed supply this year to the various districts is not sufficient to their needs?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: The demand was very great this year and we did our best. Last year only Rs. 9 lakhs were spent on purchase and supply of *aman* seeds, whereas this year Rs. 66 lakhs have been spent for *aman* seeds alone. There is a limit to Government's finance. They could not possibly do more than that.

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHOLANABISH: With regard to (*g*) (*3*), the answer is "an attempt to increase the yield by using manures and water-hyacinth compost more extensively." May I know what that precious thing "water-hyacinth compost" is?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: A kind of manure prepared from water-hyacinth by scientific treatment is called water-hyacinth compost.

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHOLANABISH: May I know where that can be done?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: It is being prepared under the supervision of the Agricultural Officers.

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHOLANABISH: May I know whether attempts are being made to prevent the water-hyacinth from destroying the crops?

Mr. PRESIDENT: I do not think that question arises.

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHOLANABISH: It arises in that it affects the "Grow More Food" campaign; because if you do not prevent the growth of water-hyacinth you cannot carry on the campaign.

Mr. PRESIDENT: But I do not think that it comes within the scope of this question.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Arising out of answer (*g*), will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state how many acres of land more have been brought under cultivation for the purpose of growing more food?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: The information is not available now. After the cultivation is made, it will be available.

Dacca riots.

25. Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Home Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) on what date the Dacca riots broke out this June and what was its origin;

(*b*) who were the persons stabbed during the said riots and, of them, how many were seriously injured, how many bore slight injuries, and how many were stabbed to death;

(*c*) whether the situation has been brought under control and what steps Government took to stop the spread of the riot;

(*d*) what steps Government have adopted to prevent a recurrence of such riot in Dacca;

(*e*) what sections of the citizens of Dacca were fined for this riot and what was the total amount of fine imposed on each sections; and

(*f*) what principle was adopted in the imposition of such fine?

MINISTER in charge of the HOME DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin): (*a*) 6th June, 1943. Origin not known.

(*b*) A statement is laid in the Library. Names of the victims have not been reported.

(*c*) and (*d*) Yes. An order under section 144, Cr.P.C., was promulgated prohibiting carrying of *lathis* and weapons and assembly of five or more persons. Restaurants and excise shops were closed. Collective fines were imposed. Armed pickets were posted where necessary. Civic Guards were on duty in their respective *mohallas*.

(*e*) Both Hindus and Muslims.

Total fine imposed on Hindus Rs.32,000.

Total fine imposed on Muslims Rs.8,000.

Total fine imposed on both Hindus and Muslims Rs.18,000.

(*f*) If in a locality inhabited by Muslims, a Hindu was stabbed, the collective fines were imposed on the Muslims and *vice versa*.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state how is it that the total fine imposed on both Hindus and Muslims is Rs. 18,000, while the total fines imposed on Hindus and Muslims have been separately shown to be Rs. 32,000 and Rs. 8,000 respectively?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: Very likely Rs. 18,000 was imposed on a locality where both Hindus and Muslims were jointly responsible for the crime which took place in that area.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: It is not a question of being "very likely". The question is: whether you are sure that the total fine imposed on both Hindus and Muslims was Rs. 18,000?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Das, the reply is quite clear. The figure 18,000 represents that fine imposed for a crime for which both the communities, the Hindus and Muslims, were responsible in a particular locality.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Sir, I have another supplementary question. Arising out of (*a*), will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state whether any attempt was made to ascertain the cause of these riots?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: Investigations are still proceeding to find out what are the causes.

Mr. KRISHNA CHANDRA ROY CHOWDHURY: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state what proportion of the imposed fine has been realised approximately?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: I ask for notice.

Fracas between passengers and conductors of tramcars.

26. **Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR:** Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Communications and Works Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the fact that fracas between the passengers and the conductors of the Calcutta tramcars have become an everyday affair, resulting in the breach of the public peace;

(*b*) if it is a fact that these disturbances are mainly due (*i*) to the behaviour of the conductors in starting the cars before the passengers, particularly the female passengers, with their children, can conveniently get down from or get into the cars, (*ii*) discontinuance of transfer tickets, and (*iii*) shortage of small coins; and

(*c*) whether the Government propose a quick enquiry into the matter and take necessary steps in this connection; if not, why not?

MINISTER in charge of the COMMUNICATIONS and WORKS DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Mr. Barada Prasanna Pain): (*a*) There have been some disturbances between passengers and conductors of tramcars.

(*b*) (*i*) and (*ii*) As far as can be ascertained, these disturbances are mostly due to overcrowding and shortage of small coins.

(*c*) In view of the action taken by the Police against those responsible for breaches of the peace, introduction of the coupon system to meet shortage of small coins and other measures taken by the Company which have all helped to prevent any further disturbances, no further action is necessary.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if he is aware that among those responsible for breaches of the peace some conductors were also involved?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Will you kindly repeat your question?

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: In reply to (*c*), the Hon'ble Minister says that action has been taken by the police against those persons responsible for breaches of the peace. My question is: will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state whether conductors were connected with the tramcar fracas?

The Hon'ble Mr. BARADA PRASANNA PAIN: I want notice.

Mr. HARIDAS MAJUMDAR: Referring to my questions (*a*) and (*b*), will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if he is aware of the fact that the behaviour of the conductors also is responsible for such fracas?

The Hon'ble Mr. BARADA PRASANNA PAIN: No, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Questions 27 and 28 may stand over, as the Hon'ble Ministers concerned are not present.

Medical relief to villagers.

29. Mr. NUR AHMED: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Public Health and Local Self-Government Department be pleased to state what facilities are now provided in the villages of Bengal for the medical relief of the villagers?

(*b*) What is the total number of dispensaries and hospitals in Bengal at present; and how many of them are located in the rural areas?

(*c*) How many people on an average are served by a dispensary in the rural areas?

(*d*) What is the total number of registered doctors or medical licentiates and bachelors in Bengal?

(*e*) Do the Government propose to introduce any scheme to give subsidy to *baidyas*, *hakims* and other recognised medical men practising in the rural areas of Bengal? If not, why not?

(*f*) What measures have been adopted by the Government up to this time to provide adequate medical relief to the village people of Bengal?

(*g*) What special measures have been taken by the Government to provide medical relief to *pardanashin* Muslim women in the villages?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi JALALUDDIN AHMAD: (*a*) Medical relief in villages is provided by different types of dispensaries under the various systems of medicine, viz., Homeopathic, Ayurvedic, Unani and Allopathic established and maintained by the local bodies and in some cases aided by Government.

(*b*) There are about 2,000 hospitals and dispensaries in Bengal (excluding temporary medical centres) of which more than 1,600 are in the rural areas.

(*c*) About 33,000.

(*d*) There are 4,034 registered medical graduates and 7,700 registered medical licentiates in Bengal.

(*e*) No. Subsidised dispensaries are more useful to the villagers than subsidised doctors.

(*f*) Medical relief in the rural areas is the primary responsibility of the local bodies. Government have, however, shared this responsibility by making grants-in-aid to rural dispensaries at the rate of Rs.500 for a thana and Rs.250 for a village dispensary on certain conditions. A fairly large number of dispensaries in the rural areas has also been established by the Union Boards throughout the Province with the aid of the Government of India's grant for rural uplift.

(*g*) No special measures have been taken.

Khan Sahib NURUL AMIN: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if he is aware that owing to the inelasticity of the income of the district boards these institutions are not in a position to cope with the growing demand for rural dispensaries, and whether there is any scheme for subventing the district boards for aiding these rural dispensaries?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi JALALUDDIN AHMAD: Government have a scheme under consideration. The decision to make grants-in-aid to thana dispensaries at the rate of Rs. 500 and Rs. 250 for village dispensaries was taken in order to help the growth of dispensaries in the rural areas.

Khan Sahib NURUL AMIN: Is the Hon'ble Minister aware that the subsidy of Rs. 500 to thana dispensaries and Rs. 250 to village dispensaries is not granted in all cases? It is only in very limited cases that this grant is sanctoned.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi JALALUDDIN AHMAD: The grant is sanctioned on certain conditions. If those conditions are complied with, Government gives the grant. The grant is not made if those conditions are not complied with. Many dispensaries have already grown up in rural areas due to this facility.

Khan Sahib NURUL AMIN: Will the Hon'ble Minister please state if he is aware that it is not the conditions which require fulfilment by local bodies but that there are certain circulars of Government which deprive these union boards dispensaries of subsidy from Government if they were started after 1921?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi JALALUDDIN AHMAD: I do not know of any practical difficulty that has risen on account of this circular, because I find that many dispensaries have been started in the rural areas on account of this help.

Khan Sahib NURUL AMIN: Is the Hon'ble Minister aware that no grants-in-aid were sanctioned by Government for dispensaries started with the help of the Government of India grant?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi JALALUDDIN AHMAD: I want notice.

Points of Information.

Rai Bahadur BROJENDRA MOHAN MAITRA: On a point of information, Sir. I put in a short-notice question regarding the claims of members of this House for the period that section 93 was in operation. May I know the decision of Government on the point, please?

Mr. PRESIDENT: The matter is still under consideration and is the subject of correspondence between the Legislative Council Department and the Bengal Government. That is why I do not propose to allow that short-notice question.

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHOLANABISH: On a point of information, Sir, regarding my question No. 21 which was not fully answered on the 15th, but was left over for a subsequent day. The Revenue Minister is absent today. May I know when the question will be answered?

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Hon'ble the Revenue Minister is absent and it is not possible to say when the question will be answered. He is unavoidably absent today. I shall ascertain it from him when he comes.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: On a point of information, Sir. I also had tabled as many as 5 questions on the food situation in Bengal and I had requested that they be treated as short-notice questions. I understand that the Chair has been pleased to allow them. But as yet, Sir, I do not know when those questions will be answered.

Mr. PRESIDENT: They were admitted as short-notice questions and the departments concerned were informed but no reply has yet been received from the Government departments.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: I may also mention that the usual time for replying to these questions has already passed. It is no longer a short-notice question now. I submit that in the ordinary course it should now be answered, and before the Food discussion is taken up in order to enable us to deal with that question an answer to those questions will be absolutely necessary. So, I request the Chair to insist on the Hon'ble Minister giving us an answer before the date of the discussion on the food situation.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Can any Hon'ble Minister supply any information on the point?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: When short-notice questions are put and no reply is sent thereto, it is to be assumed that the Minister concerned does not agree to accepting the question as a short-time question. I understand it is subject to his approval?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Yes, that is so.

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: So it may now be assumed that the approval has been refused and the question lapses.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: Sir, having regard to the fact that the usual time has already passed as I have submitted, what contention has the Government got to put forward for not answering the questions, specially as they will be very necessary at the time of the discussion of the food question?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: I am afraid my friend is labouring under a very great mistake to think that if a certain period of time passes before a short-notice uqestion is answered, it becomes automatically an ordinary question. I submit that that is not so. A short-notice question stands by itself. When leave is refused the matter ends there. If you want information on that matter, then you are to put in another question. You cannot treat short-notice question as an ordinary question.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: Sir, I want your ruling on this point.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Whenever a short-notice question is admitted as such, it is sent to the department concerned with the suggestion that if Government do not agree to treat it as a short-notice question then it may be treated as an ordinary question.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Sir, I put in a question about a year ago about A.R.P. organisation and a promise was made in this House that the question would be answered. But it has been pending for over a year and has not been answered.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Nur Ahmed, it is very difficult for the department to answer your question off-hand, because the matter happened one year ago. If you make a reference to the Secretary, I am sure the matter will be enquired into.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: Sir, in view of what has fallen from the Chair, may I know what is the answer of the Hon'ble Minister about the short-notice question?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: If that is your ruling, Sir, then the answer will be sent when it is ready.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Sir, may I ask the Hon'ble the Home Minister and the Hon'ble the Finance Minister through you whether they have in their possession the latest information regarding the claims of the members in respect of their allowances during the pendency of the Proclamation section 93?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Will the Hon'ble Minister kindly enlighten the House on this point?

The Hon'ble Mr. TULSI CHANDRA GOSWAMI: We may hear about it very soon and perhaps on the next sitting day or a day after I may be able to enlighten the House on the point.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I propose to vary the order in the programme of business slightly; the next item will be the Bengal Vagrancy Bill, 1943.

Message received from the Assembly regarding the Bengal Vagrancy Bill, 1943.

SECRETARY (Dr. S. K. D. Gupta): Sir, the following message has been received from the Bengal Legislative Assembly:—

"The Bengal Vagrancy Bill, 1943, as passed by the Bengal Legislative Assembly at its meeting held on September 15, 1943, has been duly signed by me and is annexed herewith. The concurrence of the Bengal Legislative Council to the Bill is requested.

CALCUTTA,
The 18th September, 1943.

Sd. SYED NAUSHERALI,
Speaker,
Bengal Legislative Assembly".

Sir, I herewith lay on the table the Bengal Vagrancy Bill, 1943, as passed by the Bengal Legislative Assembly at its meeting held on the 15th September, 1943.

The Bengal Vagrancy Bill, 1943.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi JALALUDDIN AHMAD: With permission of the Chair I beg to give notice that I shall move at the meeting of this House one the 22nd September, 1943, that this Bill be taken for consideration and passing.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. I would like to inform the House that amendment to the motion for consideration of this Bill should reach the Council Department by 11 a.m. tomorrow.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Sir, is it not too early?

Mr. PRESIDENT: The only motions that you can give notice of are motions for circulation and motions for reference to the Select Committee. So, I don't think the time is short.

Mr. MESHBAHUDDIN AHMED: Sir, there was a conference between Mr. Lalit Chandra Das and other members of the Opposition and himself. The party was anxious to let the Bill go through and be finished as quickly as possible.

General discussion on the Budget.

Mr. BIRENDRA KISHORE ROY CHOWDHURY: Sir, the circumstances in which the present budget has been placed before this House and discussion on it has been invited on its floor are in every sense extraordinary. They are extraordinary in the first instance because the budget which was introduced a few months ago and which we had an opportunity of discussing in this Chamber had to be introduced *in toto* for the second time in the Legislature. Secondly, the circumstances in which the budget has been presented are extraordinary because of the intense food crisis which has overtaken this province during the last few months and which has already carried hundreds of our co-citizens to the jaws of death. It is for us to see to what extent the Government policy as embodied in this budget can help us in meeting this regrettable and scandalous state of things. Thirdly, the budget is extraordinary on the ground of its being a deficit one by more than 7 crores.

In considering the budget which the Hon'ble Minister of Finance has presented to us, I must refer first to the policy which the Government has so far pursued in regard to civil supplies. This is because this matter is uppermost in my mind as it must be uppermost in the mind of all my colleagues here. I shall necessarily have to postpone the discussion of many points which arise in this connection to a future occasion when the food situation may be discussed at greater length. But all the same I need not make any apology in referring to it at some length on the present occasion. From the budget itself we only get at the fact that the Government is

spending Rs. 10 crores for the purchase of rice and would sell it to the Government employees and to the general public at a loss of 3½ crores. Of this loss one crore will be on account of relief to the comparatively low-paid Government employees and 2½ crores on account of relief to the general people. We are also informed that 190 lakhs will be distributed as gratuitous relief and another one crore and sixty lakhs will be spent in starting public works for relief purposes. These steps together with the appointment of a Food Commissioner are in the right direction no doubt. But, Sir, I wish these steps were taken far earlier. The present Ministry came to power in April last. But for over four months it merely groped in the dark. From the Press and on the platform there had been repeated demands for declaring Bengal a famine area and for bringing into operation the famine machinery. But even now in spite of the fact that Government has admitted the existence of wide-spread famine in the province, it is unwilling to appreciate its full implications and act accordingly. So, however enthusiastically the Hon'ble Minister may have worked, it has been so far absolutely misguided and the result is the tragedy which is being enacted in the streets of Calcutta and in the towns and villages of Bengal. Possibly, if the Ministry immediately after its assumption of office appreciated the fact that there was intense shortage of food-supply in Bengal, many lives which have been lost already and will be lost in the immediate future might have been saved.

If, Sir, the present Ministry was not deluded by the assumption that there was no shortage of supply in the province, it might have convinced the Government of India and the other provinces of the necessity of coming to the rescue of Bengal. But a deluded Government can only delude others. It created an impression in other provinces as also among the official circles at Delhi that Bengal was not actually short of food and did not require the attention on their part which it deserved. This is, in my opinion, Sir, the greatest disservice which has been rendered to the people of this province.

The way in which foodstuffs have been purchased and distributed calls also for criticism. Many of the transactions in this connection have not been as above board as all transactions on the part of the Government should be. Neither from the budget nor from the statement of the Hon'ble the Finance Minister we get any information in this regard. The statement of the Hon'ble Minister in charge of Civil Supplies also leaves us in the dark. But the Hon'ble Minister in charge of Food of the Punjab Government has let the cat out of the bag. In a published statement he has informed the Indian public that out of transactions in wheat and in wheat products the Government of Bengal has eked out a profit of twenty lakhs of rupees. What has been done by the Government and the middlemen selected by it in regard to wheat transactions is presumed to have been done in respect of transactions in rice and paddy as well.

In the face of the great calamity which food shortage has brought in its train, one does not feel inclined to look into the other items of the budget and discuss the policy they involve. But, Sir, some of these items are also very closely connected with the welfare of Bengal's population exceeding

fifty millions. Experts are agreed that malaria which makes so much havoc in this province is chiefly the result of malnutrition and low vitality of our people. At no time before this vitality has been lower than at the present time. The result is that malaria is already taking its toll in different places and I am shuddering to think of the coming month which is ordinarily the malarial season in Bengal. People who are starving today will fall a very easy prey to this fell disease. Its only remedy is quinine whose supply has fallen short deplorably. Even sometime ago, I am told, 30 grains of quinine were available at the controlled rate of eight annas. But now the same amount is charged at Rs. 3, and that in Calcutta. A man attacked with malaria requires at least three times this amount to get a cure. But people who are already dying of starvation will have nothing to spend on quinine. I do not find in the budget any satisfactory provision for meeting this situation. It is not necessary for me on this occasion to go into the details of Government attitude towards the manufacture of quinine in this province. But, Sir, apart from the discouragement which was shown to indigenous quinine in pre-war days, even since the outbreak of the war nothing has been really done to encourage and promote the manufacture of this essential drug in Bengal. In the U.S.S.R. quinine is manufactured out of plants, only one year of age. But in Bengal four years have elapsed since the outbreak of the war but we have been told that plants are still growing. While, however, the plants will grow people will die.

I cannot fully congratulate the present Ministry on the budget which it has presented to us. We are not also very hopeful that it will meet effectively the extraordinary situation which has been created in this province both by man and Nature.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Mr. President, Sir, with your permission I should like to say a few words on the budget estimates that have been presented to this House. Sir, we are passing through very extraordinary times and the budget which has been presented to us bears the mark of those extraordinary times. It is an extraordinary budget meant to suit an extraordinarily critical time. I must congratulate the Hon'ble the Finance Minister on the courage he has shown in presenting a budget which shows a great deficit. The budget shows a deficit of 7 crores and 36 lakhs. Even in the worst of times, Sir, Bengal had no such huge budget deficit. As far back as 1930-31, there was a deficit of 2 crores only at that time of economic depression but in this time there is a deficit not only of 7 crores and 36 lakhs but a loan of 14 crores as the opening balance. This shows a dismal picture of Bengal's future.

Sir, it would not be out of place here to say a few words on the history of Bengal's finance. Bengal has always been treated by the Centre in a stepmotherly fashion among the provinces and never has any adequate justice been done to this province. As a result of the Meston Award Bengal got only 25 per cent. out of its total revenue income of 28½ crores; while the United Provinces got 60 per cent., Madras 40 per cent. As a result of this crippling of its income Bengal has always been labouring under great difficulties. As a result of the Meston Award the two provinces which are

industrially advanced, I mean Bengal and Bombay, were left to starve whereas the Punjab, Madras and other provinces were put in a better position. In consequence of this Bengal has been crying itself hoarse for justice but no heed was ever paid to her. Then came the Otto-Neimeyer Award. It did some justice to Bengal but not wholly. Out of the subvention of three crores recommended by Sir Otto-Neimeyer, nothing was given to Bengal but Bengal's loans amounting to 8 crores prior to year 1936 were remitted. He also recommended the transfer of the jute duty up to 62½ per cent. but in other respects the award did not recommend any subvention to Bengal.

So, Sir, Bengal could not take full advantage of the inauguration of the Provincial Autonomy. Then, Bengal's calamity began with the war as Bengal was placed in a peculiar position. Bengal had to spend a large sum on civil defence. Though it is a deficit budget, it had to borrow and within three years we find that Bengal had to spend about Rs. 916 lakhs and odd on civil defence. Out of this the Centre has contributed six crores and odd and Bengal had to bear Rs. 318 lakhs and odd. With the entry of Japan into the war, the position has been aggravated. Then, Sir, the food situation became very acute. I do not like to apportion blame among the past Ministry and the present Ministry; but this is a matter on which all will agree that it is a critical problem that Bengal is faced with today. Then, Sir, we find that the food problem is the cause of the deficit. According to the budget estimates the Bengal Government has incurred a loss of Rs. 3½ crores by selling rice and paddy at control rates and it has also to spend money in order to purchase foodgrains from other provinces and the setting up of the Civil Supply Department has cost Bengal Rs. 31 lakhs. So, for these various reasons Bengal had to incur an expenditure of Rs. 7 crores: that is not all. If rationing is introduced in Calcutta, its suburbs and in other district towns, it will cost Government a great lot which has to be debited against the already deficit budget. Therefore, Sir, Bengal, has got a very strong case for demanding subvention from the Central Government. As I said, Bengal has been treated very unfairly and has not been given full share of its income. Jute is the monopoly of Bengal. But the entire amount of the jute duty has not been given to Bengal and Bengal's share owing to war has been reduced by a crore as compared with that of the pre-war period. So Bengal can legitimately demand from the Central Government the full amount of the duty realised from jute. It is one of the grounds on which Bengal can ask for subvention from the Central Government. Another thing, Sir, is this: Bengal is the only province where salt is imported and the Central Government realise duty on salt: since the inauguration of the Provincial Autonomy not a single pice has been given to Bengal on account of the salt duty.

Sir, section 140 of the Government of India Act says that unless an Act is passed by the Federal Legislature, nothing can be given. If the Central Government can pass such a Bill and pay at least 80 per cent. of the duties realised on salt in Bengal, then it will go a long way to make up the deficit of Bengal. Sir, the third ground on which Bengal can ask the Central

Government for subvention is that Bengal's income from Customs duty has shrunk to a large extent owing to the war condition. Sir, Bengal's income from other duties has also been reduced. There is another ground on which Bengal can ask for justice from the Centre. Bengal stands on the forefront of the war and it has got to keep up the morale of its civil population by giving them as much relief as is practicable. Sir, starvation is running rampant in Bengal today, and it is the duty of the Central Government to supply foodgrains to the people of Bengal to save them from starvation and death. Sir, a large percentage of expenditure incurred for supplying food at the reduced rate to the civil population should be borne by the Central Government. There are other minor grounds on which Bengal can ask for justice from the Central Government. So, I strongly urge upon the Ministry to put strong pressure on the Centre for giving subvention. Another aspect of the budget on which, with your permission, I should like to speak, is the prevalence of malaria and cholera in this province. Sir, malaria and cholera are very good friends of famine. The Hon'ble the Food Minister has stated in this House that Bengal has been organised on a famine basis and that a famine organisation has been set up. Sir, I find that there is an important omission in the budget. There is no increase in the expenditure on account of public health. Dispensaries and other organisations for medical relief should be set up side by side with the organisations for supplying food to the people. I am speaking from my personal experience of Chittagong where malaria is running rampant and cholera has recently broken out in an epidemic form. There is no medicine nor is there any doctor and people are dying there like cats and dogs and there is nobody to prevent it or to check it. Sir, in my humble estimate, more than 50,000 people have died up till now for want of medical treatment, but I find no provision for this in the budget. Sir, I think, this is also important from all points of view. Food should be supplied, and at the same time arrangement should be made for supply of medicine and medical treatment. The speaker, who sat down before me—I thank him for this—stated that quinine is not available. That is exactly the case in Chittagong. The district board, according to the report of the District Health Officer, appealed to the Government for supply of quinine. He said that there was not a bit of quinine in any dispensary. All dispensaries have ceased to function in Chittagong. There is serious epidemic in Chittagong town. If today any person visited any house in Chittagong, he will find malaria-stricken people in every house. Still, Sir, there is no quinine, no suitable organisation for the distribution of quinine in Chittagong.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: On a point of order, Sir. We are having a general discussion on the budget now. These discussions will cover fields pertaining to every department of Government. I notice that my friend Mr. Nur Ahmed is speaking about the Public Health Department, and the Hon'ble Minister in charge of that Department has left when he was referring to that Department. Is it not desirable that as far as possible all Hon'ble Ministers, unless they are prevented by special reasons, should be present during this general discussion?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Most certainly. I think the Hon'ble Minister should have been here. When the discussions proceed on the budget all the Ministers should attend because the members have the right to speak on any department they like, and especially when the last speaker was mentioning something about his department, the Hon'ble Minister should not have left the Chamber. It is a matter of common courtesy to the House.

Mr. NUR AHMED: So, Sir, my humble submission to the Ministry is that they should provide more money for medicine and public health.

Sir, the speaker before me stated that the budget estimate that has been presented in this House shows no improvement over the previous one. Sir, with all respect to him, I differ. On some important aspects it differs from the old budget which was presented in February. Sir, I find that in the last budget there was only Rs. 30 lakhs provided for famine relief, but in the present budget we find Rs. 322 lakhs provided for this. In another important aspect I find that under the head "Agriculture" in the old budget Rs. 40 lakhs has been provided, but in this budget it has been increased to Rs. 133 lakhs. In another aspect, there has been a change, and that is loan from the Central Government. There was only a loan of Rs. 30 lakhs provided for in the old budget, but now it has been increased to Rs. 7 crores and more. Sir, from these points of view the budget is an improvement.

The Finance Minister has got to meet very extraordinary circumstances under an extraordinarily critical time and he has got to adjust himself. He, therefore, deserves credit from all right-thinking men of Bengal for taking this bold step. It appears that the Government which had vacated office had presented a budget which had no such scheme, and the usual 30 lakhs for famine relief from the Central Government was provided. There is another aspect of the budget on which I wish to say a few words and that is about irrigation. When a famine is declared, Government is bound to undertake small irrigation works here and there. Though some increased amount has been provided, yet schemes have not been provided and there is no scheme for test relief works for the people. The food situation in the country is very acute and I appeal to all sections of the people to combine to solve this problem. I appeal to the House to think that it is no party question and it should not be judged on party lines. There cannot be anything over which we can differ on this supreme question. Let us all unite and let us all try to save our suffering and starving brethren. I appeal to all sections of the House to co-operate with the Government to solve this most important problem. I also appeal to the Government to ask for co-operation and help from all sections of the people to tide over this supreme crisis.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. I have before me a list of members who want to speak on the budget tomorrow. On the Opposition side 9 members want to speak tomorrow and on the Government side 7 members. It would be difficult to accommodate all of them unless some

spoke today. I, therefore, propose a time-limit of ten minutes for each speaker. I must give at least 20 minutes to the Hon'ble the Finance Minister for his reply tomorrow. So, I would request the honourable members who want to speak, to do so today if they can.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Mr. President, Sir, I am sorry I cannot congratulate the Hon'ble the Finance Minister on the budget estimates for the year 1943-44 as presented by him before the House, not because it is a deficit budget, not because the deficit is alarming—for a deficit budget is not necessarily a bad budget—but because, amongst other things adequate provision has not been made for the nation-building departments and because administration is not being carried on conscientiously and diligently. This is my considered opinion.

I may cite several instances. The food problem is not being satisfactorily and intelligently tackled. Political prisoners detained without trial have not been released, their families have been left unprovided for. Jute cultivators have been badly treated—a very wrong policy has been pursued in this regard. The sufferings of the coal miners of Bengal have gone unheeded. Bengal mills, particularly textile mills, are on the verge of collapse for want of fuel but left without adequate relief. Education of the country in general and particularly of the Scheduled Caste Hindus and depressed class Muhammadans is being neglected. Teachers who are real builders of the nation are virtually starving and they are left out of account. Agriculture of the province is on the starving list. Cottage industries are not thought of. Improvement of the civil communications of the province is not on the urgent list. Road funds are not properly utilised. Sanitation and medical help have received step-motherly consideration. Nepotism, jobbery and corruption are running rampant wherever we cast our eyes. Threat to impose fresh taxes is there which is absolutely unwarranted. As I have very little time at my disposal, I shall deal with some of these items only.

We are meeting here, Sir, today under the shadow of a great calamity that has befallen our dear land, Bengal. A serious famine unprecedented in the annals of this (সুজলা, সুফলা, শস্য-শ্যামলা) fertile land, is striding past like a demon throughout the length and breadth of the province. Food situation has deteriorated so much that death-roll is mounting every day. In my last speech on this matter on the floor of this House, I have discussed the subject at certain length. I do not like to repeat the arguments afresh. What I want to point out is that the Ministry has failed and failed ignominously and miserably. The policy pursued by the Ministry with regard to procurement and distribution of foodgrains and also in the matter of increasing production within the province has been completely unplanned and ineffective and has been responsible for a gradual deterioration of the situation leading to appalling famine conditions now prevalent in all parts of the province. Its latest action in promulgating price-control of rice without making any suitable provision for supplies has intensely aggravated the misery of the people. The Ministry has failed to discharge the elementary responsibility of any

civilised Government by its failure to save human lives and to procure for the people essential commodities for their bare existence. Then, Sir, I have received a letter from a person of a mufassil village in which he says—

"দেশের দুঃখের কথা লিখে আর উত্যক্ত করতে চাই না। মধ্যবিত্ত লোক না খেয়ে ম'রে পড়ে আছে; তাদের ভিক্ষা করবার রাস্তা বন্ধ; দুঃখ জানালেও কেহ বিশ্বাস করে না। বস্ত্র-বিহীন, স্ত্রী-কন্যা একপ্রকার উলঙ্গ; ইহা খাঁটি সত্য কথা, অতিরঞ্জিত নহে। যদি কিছু পারো, ইহাদের জন্য করিয়ো। চাষীদের অবস্থা, যদি চাষ ভাল হয় তবে কিছুদিন চলে; কিন্তু চাকরী নাই, সহায় নাই, সম্পত্তি, জমি নাই। এই মধ্যবিত্ত হিন্দু-মুসলমান আজ না খেয়ে রোগে অর্দ্ধ-মৃত। এই দুর্ভিক্ষে দেশের অর্দ্ধেক লোক শেষ হয়ে যাবে।"

Messages of this nature are pouring in everyday.

This is the present situation. Sir, I should like to suggest some mode of operation in this connection. Immediate steps should be taken to isolate the big consuming areas like Calcutta. I may mention here that in my special motion that will come up before the House, I have mentioned all these things,—including their industrial suburbs, Chittagong, Dacca, Narayanganj, all places of military concentration and construction and big evacuees' camps, from the rest of Bengal, with a view to maintain the supplies in such areas with the imports from outside and to retain the supplies in rural Bengal for the relief of the poor masses and middle classes, as far as practicable, supplementing the same with surplus of the foodgrains from outside Bengal to relieve specially deficit areas. Immediate steps should be taken to prevent the purchases of *aus* paddy and rice as also the coming *aman* crop to big traders from outside, whether Government agents or others, at competitive prices, and to prohibit the export of such foodgrains to the bigger consuming centres indicated as above. Immediate steps should be taken to secure cent. per cent. control over supply, prices and distribution of foodgrains available from whatever source, to be carried on by an agency enjoying 100 per cent. confidence of the people. Sir, the situation is very gloomy and I should say without any hesitation that all our energies, all our minds should be focussed on this all engrossing problem——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Mazumdar, please speak loudly so that the Hon'ble Minister can hear you.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Sir, the Ministry, as I have already said has failed.

Sir, I now take up the case of the political prisoners. After Mr. Fazlul Huq was manoeuvred out of his office, Sir Nazimuddin came out with long promises and somehow or other gathered a number of camp-followers under the sympathetic blessings of the Governor and the European Association; but these empty promises have now been found out. Even the prisoners who have been declared innocent by the highest Tribunal of the country have not been released. They take cover under lame pleas, namely, that the procedure was declared invalid and merits were not gone into; but where merits were not considered how can you say that on merits they are guilty?

Sir, even a child knows that this argument has no legs to stand upon. But who can awake them who sleep wide awake? The Hon'ble the Finance Minister knows that his "Prince of the political prisoners", Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose, is still rotting in detention. May we know how is his feeling now?

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: He is quite hale and hearty. Why should he be rotting there?

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: My friend asks: why he should be rotting there. I may tell him that Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose who was very useful to his country, who was not only the leader but also a guide and a philosopher for his country, is now in detention and practically behind the prison bars. My honourable friend has not suffered detention; so he does not know what rotting as a detenu means when the liberty of a busy man is taken away. I am now reading a letter just received by me from the Dum-Dum Jail which will convince the House how these prisoners are being treated in respect of their family allowances. This letter has been addressed to me by Babu Aswini Kumar Ganguly.

(Here the honourable member reached his time-limit.)

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Mazumdar, you have reached your time-limit.

Dr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Sir, please allow me a little more time so that I may read the letter.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am afraid, I cannot give you more time.

Mr. AMULYADHONE ROY: Mr. President, the Hon'ble the Finance Minister has presented his budget at a most critical time when thousands of our countrymen are dying of starvation. Sir, being faced with such a situation for which the Government is responsible he is discussing, arguing, defending his actions, while men, women and children are dying on the highroads of Calcutta and outside throughout the province. Whatever may be his defence to which undoubtedly he is entitled on the analogy of an accused charged with an offence even of wilful murder, he is bound to admit that the public thoroughfares are now the hearths and homes of the people, regardless of the scorching rays of the sun and heavy showers of rain. Mr. President, innumerable deaths caused by starvation are the order of the day. Men, Sir, do scramble to find out what little remnants of food they can at the dustbins of the Corporation and municipalities—men eat on one side, dogs and cows eat on the other. Newspapers are reporting about quarrels between man and dog for a share of the thrown-out food. Sir, the heart-rending scenes of humanity reduced to mere skeletons, their hardship, misery, woe and agony bring tears to our eyes. Mr. President, this is the condition in which we are living under the provincial autonomous constitution—an utter sham and mockery enacted by the Parliament of Great Britain. The people are dying ignorant of their rights and unconscious of the obligations of the Government. Happily however, Sir, their ignorance, in the words of a poet, has been a bliss to the Ministry as well as to Great Britain. I do not like to apportion the

blame between the Governor and the Viceroy or between the present Ministry and the past, but what I want is immediate remedy. I demand a solution of the famine condition now prevailing in this country. I want prevention of any further deaths due to want of food.

Sir, it really pains me to find that public servants, excluding the judicial and some other branches, have lost their reputation regarding their honesty. I am not prepared to hold the Ministry responsible for those cases which do not come to their knowledge. But, Sir, there are cases of public officers being guilty of corruption and Government guilty of abetment. May I remind the Hon'ble the Finance Minister whether the Government received a signed representation containing serious and multifarious allegations against an officer in charge of a subdivision in the district of Jessore? May I also remind him that the signatories to the said representation made it explicitly clear that they were ready to substantiate the allegations based on facts. Will the Hon'ble Minister explain, here and now and on the floor of this House, why this Subdivisional Officer allowed the local rice-mill owners to sell rice at the highest price which was out of all proportion to the cost price of paddy? Was he personally interested in the matter? I pause for an answer.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. I am afraid, Mr. Roy, as you are making personal aspersions on responsible public officers, you must take the responsibility for those statements.

Mr. AMULYADHONE ROY: I am referring to a representation——

Mr. PRESIDENT: You should avoid these personal aspersions as far as possible.

Mr. AMULYADHONE ROY: Sir, I am referring to a representation which has already been submitted to the Government. I am only quoting the language that will be found in that representation. If the Hon'ble Minister takes a little trouble, he will at once find that the allegations are already before the Government; that is why I submit I have every right to mention all these things on the floor of the House.

The Hon'ble Mr. TULSI CHANDRA GOSWAMI: I may say, Sir, that I do not remember having received any such complaint.

Mr. AMULYADHONE ROY: The Hon'ble the Finance Minister may consult his colleague the Hon'ble Minister for Civil Supplies and he will tell him about this representation.

Mr. PRESIDENT: All this illustrates the danger of making such personal aspersions. Mr. Roy, as far as I remember, you have put a question on this very matter and I would advise you to wait for a reply to that question and not indulge in these aspersions before you get a reply from Government on this point.

Mr. AMULYADHONE ROY: Am I not entitled to raise these allegations which are already before the Government?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Just now the Hon'ble Finance Minister stated that he did not receive any such representation; possibly it has been forwarded to the Civil Supplies Department. The Hon'ble Minister for Civil Supplies is not present here. So far as I remember, you have put in a question on this subject and that question has been admitted. So I would advise you to wait till you receive a reply from the Government.

Mr. AMULYADHONE ROY: Let me then take my seat now till the Hon'ble Mr. Suhrawardy comes in.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. Why should you wait till then? Your question will be answered and you can put supplementary questions and elicit information. At the present moment, is it not possible for you to go on discussing the budget without referring to this particular incident?

Mr. AMULYADHONE ROY: Am I not even entitled to refer to this matter?

Mr. PRESIDENT: I think not.

Mr. AMULYADHONE ROY: I am not questioning your authority, Sir, but I submit I have every right to refer to this matter——

Mr. PRESIDENT: You may make general allegations in a way but if you make specific allegations you must take responsibility for the same. I would further advise you not to make any reference to this particular incident until you have received a reply to your question. You may now proceed on these lines.

Mr. AMULYADHONE ROY: Thank you, Sir. The Hon'ble Ministers should be condemned for not taking any action——

Mr. PRESIDENT: You are perhaps going to harp on that matter: but please remember that you may do so only in general terms.

Mr. AMULYADHONE ROY: I am referring to an allegation which has been already made in a representation submitted to the Government. I am not making any new allegation. I take the entire responsibility on my shoulders——

Mr. PRESIDENT: I must again remind Mr. Roy that he must not make any specific allegations till he has received a reply to his question. He may refer to the matter only in general terms.

Mr. AMULYADHONE ROY: But then the allegations are already embodied in the representation. These allegations are already there——

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am afraid I cannot argue with you. I would again advise you to act on the lines I have suggested.

Mr. AMULYADHONE ROY: All right, Sir, for I do not like to incur your displeasure——

Mr. PRESIDENT: It is no question of pleasure or displeasure but of procedure——

Mr. AMULYADHONE ROY: Sir, the only person for whom I have the greatest regard in this House is the occupant of the Chair and——

Mr. PRESIDENT: You may now go on.

Mr. AMULYADHONE ROY: My question is this: whether the Hon'ble Minister and whether the Government have made any enquiry into these allegations and whether they have found these allegations true or false. If they are false, why no proceedings have been drawn up against the signatories. who have made the representations for making false allegations against a public servant and if they are true what action has been taken against that officer? I pause for an answer. I know, Sir, there are certain rules—the Government Servants' Conduct Rules—tear them up—bury them under-ground, and let the officers declare themselves independent with this liberty that they can do no wrong. Will the Parliamentary Secretary in charge of the Civil Supply Department bear testimony as to whether the department has received further complaints from the people regarding the sale of permits for paddy? Will the Government be ready to enquire into this matter? I say immediate enquiry is necessary——

Mr. BIREN ROY: On a point of order, Sir——

Mr. AMULYADHONE ROY: Permits are being sold to the——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. Mr. Biren Roy has raised a point of order.

Mr. BIREN ROY: Sir, the honourable member is still referring to the same thing. He is referring to the Parliamentary Secretary in charge of Civil Supplies but the Parliamentary Secretary in charge of Civil Supplies is not a member of this House. Parliamentary Secretary in charge of another department cannot have access to other department files unless those files are here. So it is difficult to reply to any of the points raised by Mr. Amulyadhone Roy.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Roy, you have referred to the Parliamentary Secretary in charge of the Department of Civil Supplies who is not a member of this House. The only Parliamentary Secretary in this House is Mr. Biren Roy who has nothing to do with the points that you have raised: that is the first point. Secondly, you should avoid making specific allegations with regard to a particular matter. I may remind you that you are losing your time.

Mr. AMULYADHONE ROY: Sir, I am discussing a very important point.

(Here the member reached time-limit and resumed his seat.)

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: Sir, this is a general discussion of the budget and so one has got to keep in view the abnormal times in which we are living. It is also common knowledge that grievances are widespread and are shared by almost every individual in this province. Therefore, when the present Ministry has to present a budget in these extraordinary

circumstances it is no wonder that the budget will be subjected to very sharp criticism and it is quite probable that some of these criticisms are perfectly well-founded. The present Ministry came into being in the fourth week of April last. Now, Sir, the circumstances under which the present Ministry has been called upon to present this budget are well-known to everybody. It is, therefore, not very reasonable to accuse this Ministry for every ill that Bengal is suffering from just now. The budget is practically the budget of the previous Ministry. The only new thing that is noticeable in it is a picture of the state of things that have come about during the last five months. Well, Sir, belonging as I do to the Ministerial Party, I confess I am not without my grievances, complaints and criticisms, and I offer them in the hope that they will be taken due note of and sought to be remedied, if possible.

I shall first take up one of the points raised by one speaker on the opposite the other day. Only the other day the question of the release of political security prisoners was raised through an adjournment motion which was deliberately talked out by the Opposition. That is my impression of the whole thing despite protestations to the contrary from my friend Mr. S. C. Chakraverti. Sir, a reference has just now been made that Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose is rotting in his place of incarceration. Well, Sir, it has become a common practice to talk of people who are in jail as "rotting". When these people are in jail, they cannot certainly be said to be in a very happy condition, either physically or mentally. I understand all that. But, Sir, some eloquence was expended on the question of people who have not been tried in courts of law and have not been regularly found guilty under the Criminal Procedure Code. This is a question, Sir, which has been discussed threadbare. Charges against such people are in possession of the Government. It has been the case with all Governments ever since the problem of such prisoners came to the fore that these people cannot be tried in an open Court, because no one would give evidence against these people for fear of their lives. Therefore, speaking of such people as being innocent will be running contrary to facts. There is evidence against these people, and it is not that Government simply for the sake of putting these people into jail have resorted to this extraordinary piece of legislation.

True that the Government in the interests of the State has had to deprive these people of freedom but let no one forget that Government have kept these persons in a high degree of physical comfort.

Now, Sir, I have got some grievances of my own so far as the Education Department is concerned. My friend, the Education Minister, tells me—I have had talks with him—that so far as expenditure in his department is concerned, everything has come to a standstill, and that the Education Department has necessarily to suffer. Now, Sir, there are many educational institutions which exist because of the Government grants-in-aid. Everywhere Government has come to the rescue of its employees by giving ration allowances, dearness allowances and so on and so forth; but these grants-in-aid have not been increased to my knowledge. The result is that the poor teachers of such institutions are suffering terribly. I do not understand

why, while money is being found for everything, the education of the youths of this province is to be neglected in this way. Sir, if Government do not take measures immediately to that end, the education of the youths who are the future hope of the country will suffer seriously, and this will certainly not bode well for the country. Now, Sir, as my time is limited to 10 minutes only and as I think possibly I have already spent five minutes of it, I do not propose to go into the matter in any more detail.

Now, Sir, the Education Department is also in charge of the Wakf Department of the Bengal Government. The present Bengal Wakf Act came into operation on 1st March, 1936, and both the Hon'ble Minister for Education and my humble self had a share in framing this piece of legislation. Sir, I also had the honour to be a member of the Board of Wakfs along with my honourable friend the present Education Minister. Now, the working of this particular piece of legislation for a period of seven years has brought to the surface many lacunæ in this Bill. They require to be removed. This Bill is not serving the purpose for which it was designed, and I know, Sir, that a Bill embodying necessary amendments has been prepared, but it has not yet received Government's serious attention. Government is finding time in the Legislature for many purposes, but this Wakf Bill is not being attended to. I want to bring to the notice of the Government that over the activities of this Wakf Department the Muslim community feels very strongly. The Government of the day, in the year 1934, when the Bill was passed, did a great good to the Muslim community by sponsoring this Bill. But some amendments are long overdue and urgently called for, and if those amendments are not passed into law by Government through the Legislature without further delay, I think, Sir, a great harm will continue to be done to the Muslim community.

Sir, we hear of plans everywhere—five-year plan, ten-year plan, and so on. Many people scoff at the idea of planning. So far as the Soviet Government of Russia is concerned, plans have succeeded there enormously, beyond imagination. They plan and work up to plans, and the result is now seen—the stability and strength of their Government in the face of the terrible war which they are fighting so successfully to the admiration of the entire world. Sir, our province, so far as I know, has no plans about any department. I am not complaining against this particular Government. I am complaining against previous Governments also. What will happen to our industries in which Bengal is specially interested? What plans are we making to put our industries on a proper footing the moment war is over? I should be glad to hear that planning is already in contemplation.

Sir, so far as the Communication Department is concerned, well Sir, this Department has got a bad name in the province. They do not know how to spend the money which is entrusted to them by the Central Road Fund. That is within my personal knowledge. This department needs attention Now, money has been handed over to this department for expenditure. This department could not spend that money, and that money had been This department could not spend that money, and that money has perhaps lapsed. That is a state of affairs with which no one can be pleased.

Transport and communication facilities are among the vital things on which the progress of our country depends, and after the war is over, road development is going to be one of the principal problems. I should like to have a reassuring reply from the Hon'ble Minister that he is alive to the question of road development and that he is planning ahead. It is necessary that we should have a road development plan ready to be put into operation as soon as the war is over, or even during its pendency, if possible.

Sir, my friend Mr. B. K. Roy Chowdhury very pertinently referred to the question of public health in the mufassil. I can bear personal testimony to the conditions which are prevailing in the mufassil. Not only quinine but many other essential drugs are not available. I feel that the Local Self-Government Department must be more alive to the conditions which prevail in the mufassil.

SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTY: Mr. President, Sir, before I speak on the budget, I just want to draw your notice and the notice of the House to the desirability of forming a Public Accounts Committee. This is so relevant to the discussion of the budget that I am compelled to mention it now. Sir, unless we have got any representation on the Public Accounts Committee, we shall not be in a position to know the details of the working of the various departments, and, as our friend Khan Sahib Abul Quasem has justly pointed out, we shall not be in a position to know from the papers supplied to us what items are lapsing, what amounts are not being spent, and so on. You, Sir, are the custodian of the rights and privileges of this House, and I hope that you will take necessary steps in the matter. We have been agitating over this point for several years past but nothing has materialised so far.

Now, Sir, as regards the present budget, I should say that it is a budget of despair both to the Government as well as to the people. The pressure on the exchequer is great whereas the resources are small and scanty, and this has been admitted by the Hon'ble the Finance Minister himself. And on the top of all this, it has also been pointed out by many speakers here that since the inauguration of Provincial Autonomy in the provinces a lack of plan and a lack of policy has been the constant feature of our budgets. We have, of course, fallen upon a time which is unprecedented in the annals of British rule in this country. Devastation of the country by flood and consequent famine has upset the normal life of the province and in the due course of events the provincial exchequer has got to meet the most pressing and immediate needs of the people. Previous to this, with regard to the question of flood and other things we have again and again in this House stressed the defects of the irrigation system which was of paramount importance to Bengal and especially to western Bengal. If I remember aright, Sir, the first resolution that was moved in this House when it came into being was for the formation of a Waterways Board which would in co-operation with the neighbouring provinces formulate a policy and a plan, so that the rivers would be properly irrigated and something would be done to prevent the gradual silting up of the courses of the rivers and

thereby stop the floods or utilise the floods in such a way as to fertilise the soil of the country. But Sir, nothing has been done. It is useless for me to speak on this same subject on this occasion nor do we expect that any improvement will be made, although lack of a comprehensive scheme of irrigation is seriously responsible for the floods both in Midnapore and Burdwan. Another sordid picture has been presented before the House by Mr. Nur Ahmed about the district of Chittagong and I may say that the same picture holds absolutely true about another most unfortunate district in this province, namely, Midnapore, which is a place, where both Nature and man, as has been so appropriately termed by the Finance Minister, have conspired to bring upon it the great calamity from which we are all suffering at the present moment. The loss of life owing to disease and starvation has been appalling in this district and I do not know whether the relief work that is now going on is quite commensurate with the needs of the locality. I have also heard that the amount spent on relief which has mounted up to a large figure has not been properly utilised. Of course, I do not know where the fault lies and it is difficult for me to make speculation about it. Our friend Khan Sahib Abul Quasem has just now said, it is very difficult to procure evidence against political prisoners because the people are afraid to depose against them. Similarly it is very difficult to procure evidence against Government officers when Government officers are at fault, especially in respect of allegations of this nature. So what is true of political prisoners is also true of Government itself. Of course, when a Government is in power the very power relieves them of all anxieties and trouble about any defects or shortcomings which they may have wilfully or otherwise committed in any particular matter. Our friends here have spoken about the miserable food situation in the province: newspapers are every day full of horrors which the people are suffering from and it would not make the matter easier by speaking anything more about it. The food situation is acute and although a vast amount has been appropriated by the Civil Supply Department and we have heard a lot of things on the floor of this House and also in statements in the newspapers daily, we have seen no visible effect on the present situation of the province. We have seen very little by way of amelioration of the condition of the poor and deserving people and I do not know what it will come to. I do not hold any brief on behalf of the last Ministry or this Ministry. As we find it, no Ministry has done anything. If the present Ministry think that they are sufficiently representative, it is their primary duty to find food for the people of this province. But our country is not the same as other civilised countries are. That is why our Hon'ble Ministers think only of themselves.

(Here the member reached the time-limit and resumed his seat.)

Khan Sahib NURUL AMIN: Mr. President, Sir, the budget presented by the Hon'ble the Finance Minister represents certain features which deserve congratulations. It is known to all that the country is passing through an unprecedented and extraordinary situation and a better adjustment of finances could not possibly be brought about at this time. The

budget contains a humane touch. It consists of considerable provisions for test relief work in various manners which show that Government has realised the deplorable situation through which the country is passing now. But I should submit, regard being had to the acuteness of the problem, that the provision is not quite enough. It needs replenishment and if necessary a supplementary budget may be presented for providing adequate money for test relief and other sorts of gratuitous help to the destitutes. Now, Sir, there are certain features in the budget which need criticism, criticism in the spirit that would be taken note of by the Government and the Government should proceed to remedy the defects in those items. Of course, this House suffers from certain limitations. It has not got that sting which is found in the other House——

Mr. PRESIDENT: You must not talk of the other House.

Khan Sahib NURUL AMIN: I withdraw my remark, Sir. Now, Sir, criticism which is offered in course of budget discussion—and this is the only opportunity that this House has got, is of no avail unless these criticisms are taken due note of and steps are taken to remedy the defects that are pointed out in course of the discussion. It is no use placing this budget and inviting a discussion—as has been already mentioned by the Hon'ble President—if the Hon'ble Ministers have not the courtesy to be present to hear this discussion by the members of this House. Now, Sir, with regard to the receipt side, I find that there is increase on two items, namely, excise and stamps. From the financial point of view, the Hon'ble the Finance Minister may take advantage of this, but I think, this only shows the moral and material deterioration of the people. Now, Sir——

Rai Bahadur KESHAB CHANDRA BANERJEE: May I rise on a point of order, Sir? My point of order is this that the Upper House has not been given the power to vote on demands for grants, a power which the Lower House possesses. I understand that vote on certain items of expenditure will take place by this evening. In that view of the case, all the suggestions that will be offered in course of the discussion on the floor of this House will be of no avail, because those items will be passed on today's meeting elsewhere. May I make certain suggestions in this connection——

Mr. PRESIDENT: You must confine yourself to the point of order strictly. The House has the right to discuss the budget irrespective of what happens elsewhere.

Rai Bahadur KESHAB CHANDRA BANERJEE: Yes, Sir. My point is this. Suppose we make certain suggestions——

Mr. PRESIDENT: It is not a question of supposing. What is your point of order? You must not waste the time of the honourable member who is now in possession of the House.

Rai Bahadur KESHAB CHANDRA BANERJEE: My point of order is this that no useful purpose will be served by our discussion in regard to certain items of expenditure which will be passed this evening elsewhere.

Mr. PRESIDENT: That is not a point of order.

Khan Sahib NURUL AMIN: Sir, the increase in revenue under the head "Stamps" is ascribed to transfers of immovable property. We find this from the statement of the Hon'ble Finance Minister. That is not a happy augury for the country, because this will make the agriculturists landless. Already 29 per cent. of the total agriculturist population is landless, and if the sale of immovable property goes on in this way, the percentage will be increased to 50. Government should take note of this and should try to improve the economic condition of the agriculturists.

Sir, with regard to another item of receipt, that is tax under Bengal Raw Jute Taxation Act, we find there is a figure of Rs. 40 lakhs which is derived from that head. It is well-known to all that although a sum of Rs. 40 lakhs is derived from the jute tax, nothing has been done for the jute-growers. It is known to all that the Jute Mills Association has fixed a price this year for the purchase of jute, that is from Rs. 14 to Rs. 19. The Government of Bengal by a Press Note have said that they have nothing to do with this fixation of price, that they have no hand in the matter; but I submit, Sir, that the Government cannot shake off their responsibility in this matter. They must do something for the agriculturist jute-growers from whom they derive a huge amount of tax. Sir,——

Mr. PRESIDENT: I give you three minutes more to finish your speech.

Khan Sahib NURUL AMIN: Sir, when fixation of price has commenced in regard to other commodities, I do not see any reason why Government should not pluck up courage and fix the minimum price of jute. When we find that there are very big orders from American and other Governments—further orders are also expected by the jute mills—I would submit, Sir, that the Government should take steps for the fixation of price so that these jute-growers may be saved from being coerced to sell their jute at a low price. There is no parity of the price of jute this year as fixed by the jute mills with the prices of other commodities. At all times we have found that the price of jute was higher than the price of paddy or other commodities. But this time the price of jute has been fixed at a lower level than the price of paddy and other necessaries of life.

Sir, we find that one crore of rupees has been provided for loss due to sale of foodstuffs to the staff of the Government. As a scheme, I do not oppose it but my grievance is this; when Government knows that the income of the local bodies, such as the district boards, is inelastic, they cannot grant any concessions to their own employees. Government was approached to grant subvention to the district boards, but Government has not even moved its little finger to come to the aid of the district boards. I should state that this is nothing but a step-motherly treatment of these institutions by the Government. They are granting ration beginning from an assistant drawing Rs. 300 down to petty chaprasis, but they are not doing anything to help the district boards to grant any such facilities to their employees.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: On a point of information, Sir. Will the Hon'ble Ministers in charge of the different departments attend tomorrow in view of your honour's ruling?

Mr. PRESIDENT: The practice is that the Hon'ble the Finance Minister replies to the budget debate. It is only proper that the other Ministers should be present here while the discussion is going on. But, strictly speaking, only the Finance Minister replies to the budget discussion.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: We are only to discuss the budget in a general way. We have no hand to turn it down. So, Sir, it is in the fitness of things that all Ministers should attend. I think you will again press on them the necessity of being present. Otherwise, the rules should be amended so that this may be done.

The Hon'ble Mr. TULSI CHANDRA GOSWAMI: I am taking notes as far as possible in order to ascertain the views of honourable members, so that I may be able to reply to the points at the conclusion of the discussion. The time is short, but my attempt will be genuine.

Adjournment.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Council stands adjourned till 9 a.m. on Tuesday, the 21st September, 1943.

Members absent.

The following members were absent from the meeting held on the 20th September, 1943:—

(1) Khan Bahadur Naziruddin Ahmad.
(2) Mr. Hamidul Huq Chowdhury.
(3) Mr. Kamini Kumar Dutta.
(4) Mr. Mohamed Hossain.
(5) Mr. Humayun Kabir.
(6) Maulana Muhammad Akrum Khan.
(7) Mr. J. McFarlane.
(8) Mr. Naresh Nath Mookerjee.
(9) Mr. Bankim Chandra Mukherji.
(10) Mr. Ranajit Pal Chowdhuri.
(11) Mr. R. S. Purssell.
(12) Khan Bahadur Kazi Abdur Rashid.
(13) Dr. Kumud Sankar Ray.
(14) Dr. Kasiruddin Talukdar.

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BENGAL LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DEBATES

Third Session, 1943—No. 4.

THE COUNCIL met in the Legislative Chamber of the Legislative Building, Calcutta, on Tuesday, the 21st September, 1943, at 9 a.m., being the fourth day of the Third Session of 1943, pursuant to section 62(2)(*a*) of the Government of India Act, 1935.

Mr. President (the Hon'ble Sir BIJOY PRASAD SINGH ROY, K.C.I.E.) was in the Chair.

General discussion of the Budget.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. In order to accommodate as many speakers as possible in the matter of the general discussion of the Budget, I propose not to take up the questions today.

There is one other matter. I have received notices of three Special Motions on the food situation in this province—one by Mr. Shrish Chandra Chakraverti, the other by Mr. Lalit Chandra Das and the third one by Mr. Haridas Majumdar. I have examined all of them. Mr. Haridas Majumdar's motion raises several issues; so that cannot be admitted. I am prepared to admit either the motion of Mr. Shrish Chandra Chakraverti or that of Mr. Lalit Chandra Das. I would, therefore, suggest that the Opposition should come to an agreement as to which motion should be moved. I want to mention another point in this connection. As the motion will be taken up on the 23rd, I would suggest that amendments should be avoided as far as possible. If a large number of amendments comes in, they will have to be examined by the Council Department, tabulated and then circulated to honourable members. There is not much time. There is the further risk that if a large number of amendments comes in, it might not be possible to take up the motion this session at all. I hope the leaders of different parties will decide the matter among themselves and be good enough to inform me by quarter to 10 o'clock today.

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN: Sir, Government may have to table certain amendments. May I know by what time such amendments should be received in your office?

Mr. PRESIDENT: By 11 a.m. tomorrow morning. I would also request the Government to restrict the number of their amendments as far as possible, because a large number of amendments may mean that the whole thing may have to be deferred for the time being.

Mr. HARIDAS MAJUMDAR: Sir, I would like to draw attention to the fact that an adjournment motion on the food issue had already been tabled by Mr. Lalit Chandra Das and it was settled that it would be taken up on the Food Day. What will happen to that motion?

Mr. PRESIDENT: In view of the special motion I do not think Mr. Das would like to press his adjournment motion. If he presses, I shall have to decide whether I shall allow it or not.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Sir, I have a special motion regarding the food situation which will come up for discussion on the 23rd. If that motion is taken up, I will not move my adjournment motion. Amongst ourselves we have agreed as to whose motion will be discussed. Mr. Chakraverti has no objection to my motion being admitted.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Then that settles the matter. I admit Mr. Das' motion and it will be taken up day after tomorrow.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: Then, Sir, there would not be any adjournment motion?

Mr. PRESIDENT: No. Amendments received will be circulated in the Chamber. I hope honourable members will realise the difficulty of the Department.

We now pass on to the general discussion of the Budget. There are several speakers, as many as five from the Ministerial Benches and eight from the Opposition Benches. Now, in order to enable all of them to speak, we require more time than two hours. My suggestion is that we sit today up to half-past eleven; in that case, all the speakers might be accommodated including 20 minutes for the Hon'ble the Finance Minister to reply. Is there any objection?

(Voices: No.)

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Sir, when the Hon'ble Mr. Goswami extended his hand of fellowship to Sir Nazimuddin, I think he was sincerely under the belief that Sir Nazimuddin's Government would be able to tackle satisfactorily the food question as well the question relating to political prisoners. Soon after his assumption of office, while opening the annual municipal conference at Behala on the 8th of May, Mr. Goswami made a statement that the Government would be able to solve the food situation very soon. He repeated this opinion at the foot of the Ochterloney Monument in a public meeting at which he expressed the belief that in the course of a few weeks Government would be able to control the food situation to the entire satisfaction of the people of Bengal. Now, Sir, weeks have lengthened into months and the present Government is now in office for over five months. Now Mr. Goswami says that Bengal is bent double with woe and agony and is a supplicant for neighbourly charity. Sir, these words I should think are indicative of strong condemnation of the acts and policies which the Government so long pursued in the matter of the procurement of food and also in the matter of distribution of supplies to the needy and helpless. Sir, we are living in the midst of a serious famine raging from one end of Bengal to the other. We find around us all evidences of a serious famine. Women and children and even able-bodied men had to leave their hearths and homes and roam in the streets of Calcutta and also in the mufassil towns. Sir, every day

we find large numbers of persons who have been suffering from the effects of starvation being carried to the hospitals and dying in hundreds. From August 15 to September 10 no less than 2,000 persons have been taken into hospitals and 937 persons have died. The story is not different in other towns. We also have seen messages from Dacca, Chittagong, Comilla, Munshiganj, Bogra, Dinajpur and other principal towns in Bengal and everywhere we find the same tale, namely, that the people are being stricken down by the effects of famine and are dying in very large numbers. Sir, why there is hesitancy on the part of Government to declare Bengal a famine area? Obviously, there is the disadvantage that the Bengal Government will in that case be under the statutory obligation of feeding the destitutes. The Hon'ble Mr. Goswami has made provision for meeting the situation. For example, he has set apart Rs. 3½ crores for supplying articles of food to low-paid Government employees, Rs. 10 crores for the purchase of food-grains, Rs. 16 crores for the purchase of *aus* crop; but, Sir, he has not been able to give us a picture of the real requirements of Bengal. He has not been able to tell us by facts and figures that these sums are quite sufficient to meet the requirements of the situation. Sir, the allotment made will not be at all sufficient to meet the exigencies of the situation. Now, Sir, even if he will come with a bigger budget he may rest assured that the Legislature will not lag behind in giving him the necessary support. So far as these figures are concerned, they are really based on the assumption that there is famine but still there is reluctance on the part of the Government to declare that Bengal is a famine area. Sir, every day that passes is very important, and I should urge upon the Government to take courage in both hands and declare Bengal a famine area and then ask for help. I understand that as a matter of fact the provincial revenues will not be quite sufficient for the purpose of meeting the situation. I believe that the Provincial Government shall have to seek the help of the Government of India and it may be that the India Government will have, in their turn, to ask for help from outside; but nevertheless the situation is such that the facts must not be ignored. Then, Sir, there is a charge made by provinces outside Bengal and that charge should also be met. The charge is made by the Punjab Government as well as other Governments that the Bengal Government is making profit out of the misery of the people. Wheat and rice were sent to Bengal, and although they were sent, they have not been properly distributed in quarters where they should go; they actually disappeared. These are charges which should be met. This being the situation, the Government should not try to wriggle out of the situation without openly making a statement as to what the position of the Bengal Government is. Then, Sir, the third food conference is coming soon, and I believe the Hon'ble the Food Minister for Bengal will be there. I hope that he will have the courage to represent all facts relating to the food situation in Bengal and emphasize the fact that the Government of India should take upon themselves the responsibility of helping the Bengal Government with large amounts. I remember, Sir, that when the Constitution Act came into force, at that time owing to deficit budgets the Bengal Government went into arrears and was indebted to the Government of India to the extent of

Rs. 8 crores. The Government of India, however, remitted that sum. Now we have a deficit budget of Rs. 7½ crores. If the facts relating to Bengal can be properly represented to the India Government, I have no doubt that the Government of India will readily come to the rescue of Bengal with sufficient money to meet the situation. In these circumstances, I think it does not behove the Bengal Government to come in with proposals for fresh taxation which, I understand, is on the anvil—the Agricultural Income-Tax Bill. It will hit hard the middle-class people at a time like this. They are already hard pressed and are finding it very difficult to make both ends meet. The sources of revenue for Government should, in my opinion, be conserved for better days after the war is over. When sales tax and jute tax were introduced, promises were held out that the income which will be derived from these sources will be utilised for the nation-building subjects. That promise was never carried out. The income from these two heads of taxation—that is the sales tax and the jute tax—is now being devoted to meeting the costs of the administration. Now if you get agricultural income, a promise should be held out that that income will be utilised for the improvement of agriculture. It is true this Government will not lag behind in making promises; but it is equally true that the income which will be derived from agricultural income-tax will be spent not for the purpose of making improvements in agriculture, but will be lost in the all-embracing cost of the maintenance of the State. So, if the Government of Bengal remember one fact that after the war is over there will be great industrial revival when Government will be hardpressed for money, then will be the time to think of agricultural income-tax. I do not deny that this is one of the principal sources of income. I do not deny that Government should take advantage of increasing its own income by taxing agricultural income, but I say the time is inopportune, the taxation should not be made now. I say this Bill should be postponed till after the war is over.

Then, Sir, I refer to another point. That point is with regard to the release of political prisoners. I know that the Hon'ble Mr. Goswami is feeling very strongly over this matter, and he is definitely of the opinion that the releases have been slowed down. Now, Sir, a rosy picture was drawn up by the Hon'ble Sir Nazimuddin on the eve of assumption of office, and they gave out the promise that so far as the question of the release of political prisoners was concerned, they would look into it very liberally. Of course, there was the idea, but they have forgotten the promise. He says that the situation has not improved since then but has gone worse. I say that the situation has bettered. When he says that the situation has gone from bad to worse, he cites the example of Arakan. He says that Buthidaung is still in the hands of the enemy. He also referred to Akyab which is still in the hands of the Japanese. But I may tell him that the Britishers stand where they are. The Japanese have not invaded Bengal. I say the situation has not worsened; the situation on the other hand has bettered for the Allies. Look at the situation in South Africa, Italy and also the position in Bengal, and how the Allies have acquitted themselves, and how they have prepared for an offensive in Burma. I say the situation

has bettered. To say that the situation has not improved is merely a pretext to shelve the question of the release of political prisoners. Then he made another abortive statement that Jaiprakash Narain was here but that he came and went away, but when he came here he could not be arrested. Now how can the Government make that a point not to release political prisoners?

(The honourable member at this stage reached the time-limit and resumed his seat.)

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA DATTA: Mr. President, I really do not want to be long over a post-mortem examination of the budget. I say post-mortem examination for the reason that so far as this House is concerned, the budget is only a bundle of papers and we have no controlling voice in the matter as the other House has by way of cut motions. Therefore, I feel there is no practical utility in our making suggestions and it would simply be wasting the time of the House in doing so. I congratulate the Hon'ble the Finance Minister on the form of the budget as also on his inimitable style. There is lucidity, there is terseness and there is gloss —all that is there; but unfortunately, it has only brought out into bold relief the helplessness of the Ministry in handling the food situation and the hopelessness of their financial position. The increase of 72 lakhs in Excise revenue receipts may be a matter for jubilation to the Government and specially, if I may say so without the least disrespect, to those Cabinet Ministers who are not abstainers; but so far as the masses of Bengal are concerned, it is a moral condemnation of the policy of the Government. I say that Islam, like other religions, condemns the use of intoxicating liquors as also all sorts of intoxicants and I take it that the Muslim League which is the only accredited upholder of Islam has not been slow in condemning it either; but unfortunately from the supporters of this Ministry which is a Muslim League Ministry, not a single word of condemnation has been heard on this score. The position the Ministry has taken up is this: they have got to get money or revenue somehow or other, no matter how or from where, for has not one of the Ministers loudly proclaimed "beg, borrow or steal" as his policy? It does not matter from where you get your money, but you have got to get it. That is why I think there is wholehearted approval of this policy regarding excise revenue. While I am on this little point I may refer to a rather interesting passage in the budget statement of the Hon'ble the Finance Minister, at page 3, 8 lines from the top. He finds consolation in the fact that "our revenues have also benefited considerably in consequence of the greatly diminished supplies of imported liquor in place of which consumers have turned to 'foreign liquor' made in India." I think he is perfectly right. It may be that the "dirty" hands of Indians have made the liquor: it may be that the stuff is the "dirty" stuff grown in India: it may be that it has been bottled by Indians. But still once you give it a foreign name, it is transformed into "foreign liquor" having all the relish and taste of imported liquor and the consumers readily relish it. This is significant in that it reveals the mentality of these consumers and from this deplorable mentality we may judge how these consumers love the people of this country and love their

country produce. Then, Sir, I come to the present policy as declared by the Hon'ble the Finance Minister in his statement that in Bengal today there is only one problem that matters: namely, the food problem. Sir, it is perfectly true. He says further—"No matter what the cost is, Government must afford relief to those unfortunates for whom failure to afford relief may mean death by starvation." This statement was made only I think a week ago and I am sure the Hon'ble Minister, when he was making this statement, knew that it was then no longer a question of "may die", but it was already a question of actual death by starvation—death not by hundreds but by thousands due to want of nourishment and foodgrains. What does it indicate? It indicates want of statesmanship, want of policy or impolicy on the part of the administration to realise the grim reality to take up the matter in right earnest and that at the right moment. While members of the Cabinet are busy with their meetings, and in having their schemes formulated, their policy adumbrated, the streets of Calcutta are practically littered with dead bodies——

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: This is exaggeration.

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA DATTA: You will have your say, Khan Sahib. This is the true picture. I do not see, Sir, how humanity can tolerate it. While the Ministry is taking their time over the policy, over the scheme, you find before your very nose how men and beasts are daily quarrelling with each other for a morsel of food from the dustbins. The other day you must have seen in the newspaper the picture of a jackal biting a boy who was trying to be his rival for a share of the castaway foodstuffs in the streets. Sir, this is the true picture. While people were dying in hundreds and thousands, the Hon'ble the Food Minister——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Dutta, your time is up.

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA DATTA: Please give me two minutes more and I shall finish.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am afraid I cannot give you any more time. You must finish your sentence.

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA DATTA: Sir, I was saying that while people were dying by hundreds and thousands, the Hon'ble the Food Minister was having his "Drive" in the villages and towns of Bengal. But what has the "Drive" resulted in? What is the quantity that has been salvaged by this "Drive"? The public has the right to know all this. They have not been told about it so far. Why is it guarded as a close secret? Why the people have not been taken into confidence and told regarding the quantities of foodgrains supplied to Bengal from the different provinces, the method of their distribution and the whole scheme behind it?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Finish your sentence, Mr. Dutta.

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA DUTTA: I have finished practically, Sir.

In view of the actual famine condition in this province, what is the policy underlying the administration? Why not declare it a famine area?

But no, nothing shall be done. The policy is a policy of drift. Let the Ministers draw their princely salaries—play with their people dying by hundreds and thousands—drive their motor cars on the streets covered with the dead!——

(At this stage the member reached his time-limit and resumed his seat.)

Mr. W. B. C. LAIDLAW: Mr. President, Sir, the situation which the Hon'ble Minister has had to meet raises a series of financial problems which are novel to this Province. There was no option but to meet the deficit by borrowing and unfortunately it has not been possible to do this within the Province. A debt has had to be incurred to the Central Government greater than that wiped out by the Niemeyer Settlement. This raises the question of what the province's borrowing capacity amounts to. If revenue receipts were likely to continue on the present scale, it might be possible, with the disappearance of abnormal expenditure due to natural calamity and war conditions, to forecast a repayment of the Province's indebtedness in a measurable period of time; but the enhancement of receipts is due to war conditions and cannot be relied on. It seems as though the Province has acquired a debt, the repayment of which, if at all possible, will only be accomplished at the expense not only of the future development but indeed of the essential services.

The Province has a strong case for subvention from the Centre on the grounds of famine conditions. The pressure on food resources of an increasing population and the deterioration of larger areas of arable land has of recent years involved the populace in a very real struggle for existence. The economy of the Province was, therefore, in no state to meet the impact of war conditions involving the sudden cutting off of the capital of the Province from sea-borne supplies. The reaction is indistinguishable from conditions of famine. If famine had arisen through natural causes in more normal times, would the Central Government have hesitated to come to the Province's assistance with shipments of foodgrains? On the contrary, history shows that the Government of India has in the past been specially enjoined by His Majesty's Government to prevent at whatever cost loss of life amongst His Majesty's subjects in consequence of a calamity threatening Bengal. Apart from this, the focus of Indian defence has shifted for the present from the North-West Frontier to the eastern border, and it behoves the Central Government to ensure that the territory on which its defences are largely based is kept free as far as possible from economic distress so that *morale* shall not suffer from this cause.

The policy of Government is to take all possible steps to minimise the effects of inflation. It is true that this is primarily the concern of the Central Government, but measures taken by them are of a nature which affect the purchasing power of the comparatively rich. There are important devices available to the Provincial Government which would go a long way towards discouraging the inflationary tendency revealed by the budget. Inflation in agricultural economy can lie hidden for a time owing to the tendency of the agriculturist to hoard what little spare money is available to him, and it is when he starts spending or de-hoarding that the full impact

of inflation is felt. This is essentially a condition which the Provincial Government can meet in some measure by an intensive savings campaign. We agree that the incidence of inflation has been very uneven. The small cultivator who had to sell his crops hastily has not benefited; but there are other classes—the large cultivator, the trader, military labour—who must have excess purchasing power, and the savings campaign should be directed towards these classes. In other countries, bonds of small denomination are issued, and as inducement to save there are clauses providing for repayment in the event of marriage and to meet agricultural contingencies. A scheme of this nature might well require the assistance of the Central Government; but the Provincial Government is in a position to give a powerful impetus to a thrift campaign. It is the greatest pity that the co-operative credit organisation is not on a better footing, as it could have been of the utmost help to Government at the present time in encouraging thrift. We suggest that now is the time when Government could profitably re-examine the co-operative organisation and consider whether through the medium of the co-operative societies, the Central Banks, and the Bengal Provincial Co-operative Bank—the apex of the structure—it would not be possible to absorb the surplus purchasing power and to turn the savings so collected at the apex to account in reducing Government's indebtedness outside the Province. The Excess Profits Tax will reduce the purchasing power of many who have acquired wealth through the food crisis, and doubtless the provincial records and the results of the Food Drive will be available to the Excess Profits Tax authorities and will assist them in assessing to the full the fortunes so shamefully acquired. In the field of taxation, the Provincial Government can also help in the anti-inflation drive by reducing the list of exemptions to the sales tax which we feel is in any case, with the exception of foodstuffs, unnecessarily large. Much also might be done by expediting the introduction of taxation on upper grades of incomes from agriculture.

The amount of cash put into circulation through the medium of agricultural loans this year is extraordinary and the amount outstanding at the end of March 1944-45 is estimated to be 5½ crores. This is a tremendous accumulation of debt and I should like a statement of the Government's policy as regards the distribution and recovery of these loans. Government cannot overlook the fact that special insistence on prompt repayment of agricultural loans at the present time will not only go far to assist the anti-inflationary drive but will also have the effect of improving Government's own position by reducing its indebtedness to the Centre. A sum of nearly 4 crores is being distributed in loans this year and we trust these loans will be issued with the greatest possible circumspection, in order to ensure that the benefit reaches those who are really in need of assistance and is not diverted to the pockets of those who would make capital out of the province's misfortune.

Before closing, I would comment on the lack of details of amounts granted as relief. This is an extraordinary item and the public would like to know a little more of the area and the number of people who are benefiting

and thirdly the constructional undertakings on which persons in receipt of relief are engaged. I would also remark that from the statement of the Hon'ble Minister for Civil Supplies we understood that the profits of wheat transaction were to be carried to the Wheat Stabilisation Fund; but no mention is made of this in the budget. Mr. Bankim Chandra Dutta described the discussion of the budget here as a waste of time. Sir, I have laid before this House my party's views on the financial situation as revealed by the budget and have given the remedies which we consider might be taken. These can be underlined or discarded by the views which are expressed in this House.

Khan Bahadur ABDUL MOMIN: Mr. President, Sir, I feel rather nervous in trying to discuss this vast subject regarding the financial position of this province as revealed by the budget introduced by the Hon'ble the Finance Minister, within the time allotted to me. This budget, I may say, is an extraordinary budget introduced in an extraordinary manner under extraordinary circumstances, and disclosing as it does a deficit of nearly half the revenue of this province I can easily characterise it as a budget which is not only extraordinary but is also gloomy in the extreme. But while considering its financial aspect we have to remember the circumstances under which we are placed owing to the proximity of the war-front to this province. I am tempted to go over some of the points about inflation and the remedies suggested by the previous speaker, Mr. Laidlaw; but I think it will be impossible to properly explain the position at the moment and within the time allotted to me. The only remark I can make about the financial aspect is that all this misfortune that has come is not of our seeking. It is due to the war in which the whole Empire is involved. Therefore, it would not be unreasonable if we ask the Government of India or even His Majesty's Government to make good the deficit or at least come to our rescue in a very substantial manner. That is all that I would like to say as regards the financial aspect. But I take this opportunity of giving expression to some observations on the administration side. In this connection, I would like to lay stress on one thing which is the first and foremost in any administration, viz., that vigorous attempt should be made to eradicate the evil of corruption and nepotism in the administration. During the period of nearly 70 years, several generations of permanent officials had established a tradition of integrity and honesty and in the last seven years it has entirely been shaken. It is now for the present Government which comes with a determination to rehabilitate the administration on the goodwill of the people to deal with corruption and nepotism. I strongly urge that steps should be taken —drastic measures should be taken—to eradicate the evils wherever they exist. Before we came into power—I say "we" because I also belong to the party of the present Government—one thing that we discussed very much and advocated was that the corruption which had crept into the services must be eradicated at any cost. I may remind the Government—I may remind the Ministry—that it was not the difference between the Muslim League and the other parties alone which was responsible for the overthrow

of the Fazlul Huq Ministry. The ground was prepared there. The administration was weakened by corruption and all sorts of nepotism and other things. People were discontented and on the top of that came the party dispute which brought about the fall. I would like to remind the present Ministry that the greatest attention should be paid to this side. I had occasion to talk to one of the Ministers when he came into office and reminded him of the promise and of the long talks he used to make about this matter. I said what about such and such person whom we knew to be dishonest—what about the officer whose integrity was challenged by every one concerned. Now, Sir, when as a caterpillar this gentleman was very very anxious, very energetic in trying to remove dishonesty, he as a full-fledged butterfly now thinks perhaps of all sorts of difficulties in the way of redeeming his promise and says that unless corruption is proved nobody can take any action. This extra-judicial mentality in the Executive is extremely to be deprecated. When people know and when you are morally certain that an officer has strayed away from the path of righteousness and honesty, Government should take action against him. While speaking on this, I would also refer to the inefficiency of the officers who are still tolerated in the services. Those who are employing them know that these people are inefficient but it is the milk of human kindness or whatever it is I do not know, or they have not the courage to take action against them, for which they are still tolerated in the services at the cost of the public. I say that if you have to exist, if you want to say that your administration is good, you must take very strong measures in this respect. Another point, Sir, on which I would like to lay very great stress is the agricultural improvement of the country. We know that on account of the severance of Burma from India we have come in for a permanent deficit so far as rice is concerned, and even if we get our normal crops Bengal will be a deficit area. It is therefore of the utmost importance that every step should be taken to improve the agricultural conditions of the country so that we may be self-contained and self-sufficient for the future. The Agriculture Department with which I have had very intimate connection, I am sorry to say, has got nothing to show to its credit except *Kakiya Bombay* and *Indrasail* paddy. This is all that they have produced during the period of 40 years. What we want now is that this policy of drift should be given the go-by and vigorous steps should be taken to see that where the defect lies the defect is remedied. I am glad that we have at the present moment an Agriculture Minister who, though he does not look it, has got a steel frame and is like an India rubber ball. He is full of energy and has got capacity and has been in touch with the people and with the land, and I am sure, if he is given proper support, we will get something within this regime. But difficulties are enormous. There are things which he likes to do but he cannot do on account of various official impediments. The Agriculture Department needs an administrator who is an administrator and not a scientist, because scientific men and philosophers have never proved to be good administrators.

Sir, we have seen that this campaign of growing more food was vigorously carried on during the last 18 months but it has brought no fruit at all.

As a matter of fact, during the last year, in Bengal so far as the rice crop was concerned there was a deficit instead of an increase. There was a decrease of 7 lakhs of acres under rice.

(The honourable member reached the time-limit but was allowed some time to finish his speech, this being his maiden speech in the House.)

Sir, I would remind the Agriculture Minister that he cannot bring about a reform or increase in the food crops by growing cabbages in his tennis courts any more than the Industries Department can solve the problem of an increase by making umbrella handles. In order to achieve this you must take things vigorously and not allow a policy of drift. In the Industries Department they have done nothing so far except, as I have mentioned, umbrella handles and certain classes of hats. It has become a contractor for supplying hats and other things to the Government of India.

Then, Sir, I will very briefly refer to that white elephant, the Commercial Museum. What is it there for? For whose benefit does it exist? Agriculture is our biggest industry in this Province. Does the Director of Industries think that people from North Bengal or West Bengal will come here to see what agricultural improvement they can make or what seeds they can grow by a study in the Commercial Museum in Chittaranjan Avenue? All this is waste of money without any profit. They are only imitations of things which are done in other countries without regard to the circumstances in which we are placed here.

Sir, it is impossible to say anything more in the short time at my disposal. I would have liked to go into the food question which was referred to by the Leader of Opposition, but I would like to take another opportunity later of referring to it.

Mr. MOAZZEMALI CHOUDHRY: সভাপতি মহাশয়, মাত্র দশ মিনিটের ভিতর Budget সম্বন্ধে আলোচনা করতে হবে; কাজেই ভূমিকা না করে আমার দু-একটি বক্তব্য আমি বলতে যাচ্ছি। বিগত সাত বৎসর ধরে আমরা প্রতি বৎসরই বাজেট নিয়ে আলোচনা করি। আমরা এই সাত বৎসরের ভিতর ফজলুল হক-নাজিমুদ্দীন, ফজলুল হক-শ্যামাপ্রসাদ এবং নাজিমুদ্দীন-গোস্বামী, এই তিনটি মন্ত্রিমণ্ডলীর কার্য্যাবলী দেখেছি। আমরা লক্ষ্য করে আসছি যে বাজেটের ভিতর এই সাত বৎসরের ভিতর প্রতি বৎসরই test relief headএ লক্ষ লক্ষ টাকা ব্যয় করা হয়। এমন কি কোন কোন বৎসর লক্ষ ছাড়া কোটির উপরও test relief বাবদ খরচ করা হয়। অত্যন্ত দুঃখের বিষয় এবং অত্যন্ত লজ্জার বিষয় যে এই test reliefএ কোন planned scheme অনুযায়ী কাজ করা হয় না। এই সমস্ত টাকা, এবং সমস্ত যদি নাও হয়, অধিকাংশ টাকা যে অপব্যয়িত হয় সে বিষয়ে কোন সন্দেহ নেই। ব্যক্তিগতভাবে আমি নিজে জানি যে কোন scheme না থাকার দরুণ যে সময় সাধারণতঃ test reliefএর কাজ আরম্ভ করা হয়, তাতে scheme করতে করতে বর্ষা এসে পড়ে এবং কাজ অর্দ্ধেক সম্পূর্ণ হওয়ার পূর্ব্বেই সে টাকা বিতরণ হয়ত বন্ধ করতে হয়; এবং কাজের অর্দ্ধেক করার দরুণ সম্পূর্ণরূপে সেই কাজের যে ফল তা আমরা লাভ করতে পারি না। অধিকাংশ ক্ষেত্রেই দেখা যায় যে কচুগাছ বা জঙ্গল পরিষ্কার করে test reliefএর টাকা ব্যয় করা হয়। কোটি কোটি টাকা বৎসরের পর বৎসর এইভাবে অপব্যয় হয় অথচ এদিকে Governmentএর

কোন দৃষ্টি নেই। কোটি কোটি টাকার এইভাবে অপব্যয় বন্ধ করা যেতে পারে যদি আমরা একটা inter-district road বা canal তৈরীর schemeএর মত একটা বড় scheme নিয়ে কাজ আরম্ভ করি এবং যখন যে জেলায় এই test relief বাবদ টাকা খরচ হবে সেই scheme অনুযায়ী খরচ করা হবে। এইভাবে যদি কাজ আরম্ভ করা যায় তাহলে অনর্থক এই কোটি কোটি টাকার অপব্যয় বন্ধ করা যেতে পারে এবং সুচারুরূপে কাজও করা সম্ভব হয়। আমার মনে হয় যে দেশের একটা মস্ত অভাব রাস্তাঘাট এবং canal, বা irrigationএর যে সব অভাব রয়েছে, সে অভাবও অচিরে দূরীভূত হয়। খাদ্য-সমস্যা সম্বন্ধে আজকে আমরা সবাই এক বিষম বিপদের সম্মুখীন হয়েছি। এই সমস্যা সম্বন্ধে বহু সদস্যই বিশেষভাবে আলোচনা করেছেন ইতিপূর্ব্বে। সে সম্বন্ধে দু-একটি কথা আমি বলতে চাই। আজকে আমাদের যে সমস্যা দেখা দিয়েছে এই সমস্যা সমাধানের উপায় Government যেভাবে করছেন, আমার মনে হয় যে, তাঁরা ঠিক নিজেরা বুঝতে পারলেও যেভাবে করা উচিত বলে মনে করেন, সেইভাবে সাহস সঞ্চয় করে কাজ করতে অগ্রসর হতে পারেন নি, half-hearted measures নিয়ে কাজ করা উচিত হয় নি। যদি সত্যিই এ সমস্যার সমাধান করতে হয় তাহলে drastic action নিতে হবে, এমনিভাবে half-hearted measures নিলে হবে না। দু একটি বিষয় আমি উল্লেখ করতে চাই। একটি কথা হচ্ছে এই যে, একথা সর্ব্ববাদীসম্মত এবং সবাই একথা জানেন যে Government ইচ্ছা করলে এবং অতীতে তার প্রমাণও পেয়েছি যে একজন terrorist বা একজন criminalকে অনুসন্ধান করে খুঁজে বার করতে Governmentএর পুলিশ কখনও তার নিজের অক্ষমতার পরিচয় দেয়নি, পাহাড়ে, জঙ্গলে বা নদনদী যেখানেই সে লুকিয়ে থাকুক না কেন সেখান থেকে খুঁজে বের করা হয়েছে। সমস্ত ভারতবর্ষের মধ্য থেকে একজন মানুষকে যদি খুঁজে বের করতে পারা যায় তাহলে লক্ষ লক্ষ মণ চাল বা খাদ্যশস্য খুঁজে বের করতে পারে না Government বা পুলিশ কর্ম্মচারী একথা আমি বিশ্বাস করতে রাজি নই। যদি তাঁরা সত্যি সত্যিই খুঁজে বের করতে ইচ্ছুক হন তাহলে তাঁরা খুঁজে বের করতে পারেন বলেই আমার ধারণা। এবং কেন পারবেন না আজ সেই কথাই আমরা Governmentএর কাছে জানতে চাই। খাদ্যশস্য এমন একটা জিনিষ নয় যে, হাজার টাকার নোটের মতন সঙ্গে সঙ্গে পকেটে নিয়ে বেড়ান যায়। কোথাও না কোথাও খাদ্যশস্য আজ লুকিয়ে রাখা হয়েছে। যদি তাই হয় সেটা খুঁজে বের করা খুব অসম্ভব মনে হয় না। সে রকম চেষ্টা করা হয় নাই। আজ থেকে যদি ঘোষণা করা যায়, প্রত্যেক police Sub-Inspector হতে Commissioner পর্য্যন্ত প্রত্যেককে এবং District Governmentএর officerদের এমনিভাবে ঘোষণা করে দেওয়া যায় যে তার নির্দ্দিষ্ট এলাকায় পনরো দিনের মধ্যে মজুত চাল খুঁজে বের করতে হবে, দেখতে হবে কোন hoard সেখানে লুকানো আছে কি না। যদি ১৫ দিনের পরে কোন রকমে প্রমাণ পায় যে তার এলাকার ভিতর লুকানো মাল রয়েছে বা বার করা হয়েছে তাহলে সেই police কর্ম্মচারী বা Government কর্ম্মচারীকে summarily dismiss করা হবে। এই রকমভাবে যদি ঘোষণা করে কাজ আরম্ভ করা যায়, আমি বিশ্বাস করি যে অচিরে বাংলাদেশের যেখানে যা কিছু hoard লুকানো আছে তা বার হবে। আমার মনে হয় যে, বিরুদ্ধ দলীয় সভ্যরা পরিষদে যে আন্দোলন আরম্ভ করেছেন সেটাও ভ্রান্ত পথে পরিচালিত হচ্ছে। তাঁদের আন্দোলনের সুযোগ নিয়ে সমস্ত পুঁজিপতী এবং মুনাফা-কারীরা আজ সাহসী হয়েছে এই সমস্ত জিনিষ লুকিয়ে রাখবার জন্য। এটা তাঁরা নিজেরাই হয়ত বুঝতে পারছেন না। Governmentকে আক্রমণ করলেই তাঁদের কর্ত্তব্য শেষ হয়ে যায়

না ; তাঁদের সহযোগিতা করা উচিত। কারণ আজ আমরা দেখতে পাচ্ছি যে দেশের যে দুর্দ্দিন তাতে Governmentএর সঙ্গে খালি বিরোধিতা করলেই হবে না ; তাঁদের সঙ্গে সহযোগিতা করে সত্যকারের সমস্যা সমাধানের জন্য আমাদের চেষ্টিত হতে হবে। এটা বিশ্বাস করতে প্রবৃত্তি হয় না যে দেশের ভিতর চাল নেই। যে তারিখে ordinance করা হয়েছে সেই তারিখ থেকে, ঠিক সেই তারিখ থেকেই সমস্ত দেশের ভিতর থেকে চাল উধাও হয়ে চলে গেল, এটা কি বিশ্বাসযোগ্য ? আর তার আগের দিন পর্য্যন্ত বাজারে চাল ছিল। শত সহস্র, লক্ষ লক্ষ ছোট ছোট দোকানে পর্য্যন্ত সেই চাল আগের দিন পর্য্যন্ত পাওয়া যাচ্ছিল। যারা পুরুষানুক্রমে ব্যবসা-বাণিজ্য করে আসছে, এক দিনে তাদের সেই ব্যবসা-বাণিজ্য বন্ধ হয়ে গেল ? তাদের কোনই stock ছিল না একথা কোনক্রমেই মনে করতে পারা যায় না ? stock তাদের আছে ; শুধু খুঁজে বার করতে হবে এবং তাদের শাস্তি দিতে হবে। আমি মনে করি যে এই সমস্ত stockists, hoarders তারাই দেশের প্রধান শত্রু ; খুনী আসামীর চেয়ে তাদের শাস্তি কিছুমাত্র কম হওয়া উচিত নয়। ফাঁশী হলেও সত্যি করে এদের উপযুক্ত শাস্তি দেওয়া হয় না। তাদের কাজের ফলেই দেশের মধ্যে এই রকম হাহাকার এবং মৃত্যুসংখ্যা দিন দিন বেড়ে যাচ্ছে। Governmentএর আর একটা দিকে দৃষ্টি আমি আকর্ষণ করাতে চাই এই যে, তাঁরা যদি মনে করে থাকেন যে শুধু তাঁদের নিজেদের মন্ত্রিত্ব রক্ষা করবার জন্য যতটুকু প্রয়োজন সেই সভ্যসংখ্যার সমর্থন থাকলেই তাঁদের কর্ত্তব্য হয়ে গেল অন্য কারো দিকে তাকাবার কোন দরকার নেই, কারো উপদেশ বা কারো suggestion গ্রহণ করবারও প্রয়োজন নেই তাহলে তাঁরা ভুল করবেন। বিরোধীবাদীরা constructive suggestion যদি দেয় তাহা গ্রহণ করা উচিত বলে আমি মনে করি। এ বিষয়ে আরো বলতে চাই যে Government আজকাল নূতন দোকান খুলেছেন,—Government-controlled shops. ব্যবসায়ী-পরিচালিত যে সমস্ত আগেকার controlled shops ছিল তার পরিবর্ত্তে সেখানে অসুবিধা ছিল বলে Government নিজেরাই এই সমস্ত দোকান খুলেছেন। সে সম্বন্ধে দু-একটি কথা আমি ব্যক্তিগত যা জানি তা বলতে চাই। এই Government shopsএর ভিতরও নানারূপ দোষনীয় ব্যাপার দেখা দিয়েছে। একটা দোকানের কথা আমি জানি, সে দোকানে যেভাবে টীনের কৌটা করে ওজন করে চাল দেওয়া হয় তাতে ১৫ দিনের ভিতর পাঁচ মণ চাল বেচে উদ্বৃত্ত রয়েছে এবং সেই চাল নিশ্চয়ই Governmentএর ভাণ্ডারে জমা হয় নাই, এ বিষয়ে আমি নিশ্চিত। এই রকম যদি Government কর্ম্মচারীর দ্বারা পরিচালিত Governmentএর কর্ত্তৃত্বাধীনে দোকানের অবস্থা হয়, সেটা অত্যন্ত লজ্জাজনক। আমি আশা করি Government অচিরে এ বিষয়ে অনুসন্ধান করবেন। খান বাহাদুর মোমিন সাহেব যা বলেছেন সেটা সবচেয়ে বড় কথা,—corruption and bribery ; এই জিনিষ যদি Government পরিচালকদের মধ্যে থেকে দূর করতে না পারে তাহলে কোন বিষয়েই উন্নতির সম্ভাবনা আছে বলে আমি মনে করি না। Minister থেকে আরম্ভ করে I.C.S. Secretary সকলের বিরুদ্ধেই অভিযোগ শোনা গিয়েছে। ভবিষ্যতে যাতে এ রকম না হয় সেজন্য আমার মনে হয় যে সকলের সঙ্ঘবদ্ধভাবে চেষ্টা করা উচিত, এবং প্রত্যেক partyর, প্রত্যেক সংঘের, Congress বা League,—যে কোন partyর সদস্যই হোন্ একমাত্র উদ্দেশ্য হওয়া উচিত, দেশের মধ্য হতে bribery and corruption এগুলি দূর করা, তাতে যে কোন Governmentকে যদি নামিয়ে দিতে হয় তার থেকে আমাদের পশ্চাৎপদ হওয়া উচিত নয়। যাঁরা সৎপথে থেকে কাজ চালাতে পারবেন এবং দেশের মঙ্গলের জন্য চেষ্টা করবেন তাঁরাই থাকবেন।

Mr. K. C. RAY CHOWDHURY: Sir, before I start dealing with the Budget proper, I would like to say a few words about the talk of inflation by Mr. Laidlaw. He is probably repeating the slogan invented by certain Government officials that inflation is partly responsible for the very high prices of food. I say it is not. Did he read what Sir Chatturam, the Minister of the Punjab, said? He said that there was no inflation among agriculturists. The peasants cannot even buy their clothing requirements. The inflation is confined to war contractors, merchants and manufacturers making huge profits out of war supplies. If Mr. Laidlaw enquires about inflation in his own office, he will find that although his Indian assistants are getting 30 to 40 per cent. above their normal pay, they are not able to feed and clothe their children properly. It is not a question of inflation among the poor and middle classes who consume rice and are eating only ½ or ¼th rations. I can prove it from official statements that the spending power of the peasants in Bengal villages has decreased. It has been repeated *ad nauseum* by Government spokesman that the present financial condition of the province is due mainly to war conditions. The deficit of Rs. 7½ crores plus a closing indebtedness of 14 crores is considered to be the result of the war conditions and therefore the Central Government must foot the bill and that all pressure should be exerted on the Central Government to get subsidies and concessions and so on. Sir, neither Bihar, nor U. P., nor Assam, nor the Punjab are attributing all ills to war conditions. It may be said that the case of Bengal is different: Bengal is the gateway for invasion of or from Burma. But what about Assam with a frontier of many hundred miles towards Burma? Has Assam complained that the food has disappeared from the province? Or that the price of rice has gone up 600 per cent.? The price of rice in Assam where lakhs of soldiers are posted, has not gone up even 200 per cent. Sir, I have just touched inflation but the time at my disposal is very short to dilate on inflation and I should now speak on other subjects.

Sir, appalling deaths of men, women, children and babies from starvation, exhaustion and disease are sure signs of terribile scarcity of foodstuffs in shops and markets. Government had to spend huge sums of money, crores of rupees, to feed the people or to subsidise feeding. The cost of rice has gone up from Rs. 6 per maund to Rs. 36 per maund. Sir, the index of food price as published in the official paper is 600 as against 100 in pre-war time. But no sound explanation is forthcoming from Government regarding this horrific price of rice although Bengal is not involved directly in war or military operations within. But what about the cost of living in countries which are directly involved in war and terribly afflicted by the war? I have got here a copy of the International Labour Review which is still being published in Montreal and I quote the index numbers of the cost of food in countries such as Germany, Japan, England etc. Sir, you will be surprised to know that these figures of 1942-43 bear no comparison with what prevails in Bengal. Australia which is in the grip of war had in 1942 95 as index price of food there compared with 100 in 1929 taken as basic. Germany, the cock-pit of Nazidom of the European world has only 83 as the index price of food which is 17 per cent. below

the pre-war level. Great Britain which imports a bulk of its foodstuffs from other countries through terrific submarine war zones has 106 in December, 1942, only as the index of food price. Tokio figure is 151 in December, 1942. Even the United States of America which is the principal base of the war and its supplies, has 100 in January, 1943. China which is involved in and devastated by war for the last six years has a figure of 600 in 1941 which is also the present figure for Bengal. Bengal food price has been brought to the same level with China in 1941. This in my humble opinion is the strongest economic phenomenon ever witnessed in India. Sir, what and who have caused this appalling scarcity of rice in Bengal, the world famous granary of this particular foodgrain? The crop reports published by the Bengal Government and recited by the retiring Agriculture Minister in March this year indicate that the production of rice (*aman* and *aus*) was almost normal or in the neighbourhood of 8 million tons. These statistics are being checked by the Government of India officials; these statistics are being examined by inspecting officers, because statistics have become a very important factor for anything that is done in these days of war. There is no mention in any reports about the failures of *aus* and *aman* crops in 1942 and 1943, as alleged by the Food Minister. Sir, Burma rice, it is true, disappeared to the extent of only half a million tons, and the normal demand may have increased by 5 per cent. due to the influx of soldiers and persons engaged on war production and evacuees from Burma. The cyclones in a corner of 24-Parganas and in a portion of Midnapore may have destroyed ½ a million tons. Therefore, from the trade point of view, from the point of view of demand and supply—here are businessmen and I want them to contradict my statement if I am wrong—when there is a shortage of a maximum of 25 per cent. taking all factors together, the price of rice cannot by any stretch of imagination increase more than 50 per cent., or in other words, the price should never have gone up from Rs. 6 to more than Rs. 9 per maund. Now, I come to export. Sir, some of my economist friends have searched very carefully the records of railway statistics for figures relating to merchandise carried by the railways, the East Indian, B.-N.R., etc., and also the export manifestoes published by the Calcutta Customs House. They have told me, they may have also told the Government, that they found that the utmost export of rice outside Bengal during the last 12 months could be only 100,000 tons. These are recorded figures; and there is no use complaining about huge exports of rice. Anybody could go to the Customs House and verify the export figures. Sir, my point is that this bogey of enormous export is unfounded. Some people say that export of rice has been made to Iran and to Africa and other Asiatic countries on a huge scale. The contention that the war condition has produced this tragic state of food affairs, is all without foundation. Six million tons of rice out of 8 millions were available in my humble opinion. Why has the disappearance of a bulk of new rice from the market not been properly explained? It is perfectly true that there has been a very good food drive, and some census of rice taken but big hoardings have not been discovered. From every man at the street corner,

in tramcars, in buses, and wherever you go, you hear people talk about hoarders and that the hoarders are protected, that there are most influential hoarders, that there is some connivance with hoarders. Everybody likewise talks of corruption and bribery among the Food Supply officials and assistants. Khan Bahadur Momin has done a public duty by laying stress on this question of corruption and bribery. Let people come forward with concrete cases, let them court prosecutions, for defamatory statements against officers, let them court imprisonment as many of our fellow patriots have done in the past for crusade against Government. Let Government order the arrest of officials on reasonable suspicion of complicity with bribery as the Government has always done in the past in cases of political suspects. This sort of action may help to change public opinion about wholesale bribery and corruption which are supposed to prevail in Government offices in Railways and in offices dealing with civil and military supplies.

The Hon'ble Mr. BARADA PRASANNA PAIN: Sir, I shall say just a few words by way of reply to one or two observations made yesterday by Khan Sahib Abul Quasem and Mr. Shrish Chandra Chakraverty. Khan Sahib Abul Quasem made a grievance that the money which is allotted for road-building purposes is not being spent, and that a good deal of it is lapsing. That fortunately is not the true state of things. Out of 15 lakhs of rupees provided last year, only 8 lakhs was spent and 7 lakhs remained unspent. The reasons were that materials were not available, transport was difficult, and by order of the Government of India, all new works were stopped. But the money which was allotted has not lapsed; it will be available any time when we are in a position to spend it. So, there can be no difficulty about that. With regard to information which was asked for about post-war road development schemes, Khan Sahib Abul Quasem must be aware that Mr. King, one of the Engineers of the Department, made an exhaustive study of the subject, and after six or seven years of investigation, he submitted a report, copies of which were placed in the hands of every member of the Assembly and the Council, but were collected back when Japan entered the war. A good portion of Mr. King's development plan was approved by the Provincial Board of Communications, and later received the sanction of the Government of India. It will take six or seven years to give effect to the portion approved, if we spent at the rate of Rs. 30 lakhs a year, which will be the sum available to us. There can be, therefore, no gainsaying the fact that Government has a very important scheme of road-planning already in its possession and no further "scheming" is necessary for the present. With regard to the point raised by Mr. Shrish Chandra Chakraverti about the want of irrigation schemes for the province, I may tell the House very frankly that the policy of the present Government is one of complete disagreement with that of its predecessor. Mr. Shamsuddin Ahmad, the Minister who was in charge of the Department of Irrigation before us, told the other House in his last Budget speech that all schemes of irrigation had to be curtailed and more curtailment would have to be made in future, because the war was on. That, Sir, is not the view of the present Government. Our view is that for the very reason that a war is on, much more food has got to be produced

not merely for those who ordinarily consume it but also for those who are engaged in war activities and war productions. To get more food, we must bring more lands under cultivation. Therefore, it is the considered policy of this Government that more and more money should be made available for irrigation, and irrigation schemes should be put through as early as possible. I am happy to be able to tell the House that the Government of India sent down Sir William Stampe, their Irrigation adviser, to confer with us. He paid us three visits and has approved of about 12 schemes and six more are on the way. Fifty per cent. of the cost of these schemes is going to be borne by the Government of India. That is very good news indeed. We have other schemes which we are examining, and I may assure the House that as soon as these schemes have passed the test of the experts, they will be put in operation in the course of the year. With regard to the complaint made by one honourable member that a Waterways Board was not formed, may I inform him that the Waterways Act was passed some time in 1934 and the Government then undertook not to put it into operation, because objections were made on the ground that it would mean a surcharge on steamer freight and fares. The assurance then given was that as soon as the economic situation of the province improved, a Waterways Board would be formed. I need not tell the House that the economic situation of the province instead of improving has deteriorated and therefore the time has not yet arrived for Government to take up the question of the formation of a Waterways Board.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Sir, I think every member of this House will recognise that we are meeting here today in circumstances which are perhaps unequalled in the history of Bengal. We have been faced with events the like of which has never been the fate of any Legislature in Bengal to contemplate. It is at any rate not my intention to look at the questions with which we have to deal from a party point of view or discuss them only with a view to recrimination or condemnation. I know that there are sufficient grounds for condemnation if one wants to do so. The system under which we are governed in the province today is itself vicious and this system does not very often allow persons who are willing to take the risk, who are willing to serve the province and the country to the best of their abilities to do all of which they are capable. I also note that apart from the general defects of the system under which we suffer, there are personal defects in the case of the different administrators we have had in the recent past in Bengal. It is not my intention to go into personal recriminations or accusations or counter-accusations. I will try to place before the House a picture, a dismal picture of the conditions with which the province is faced today. I have for the last three days been touring in the interior of my district, Faridpur. I have seen conditions in the interior which are appalling. It is not possible for members of the Council to visualise the picture of famine which obtains today. Nevertheless it is necessary for us to realise that such conditions have never obtained before in this province —a province which in the past was described as "Golden Bengal" (*Sonar Bangla*). The picture I have seen in my district is the picture of all the

districts in the province—that is the picture, in a word, of the province as a whole.

Now, Sir, my time is short and I must say one or two things about the system of the administration which is responsible for the present *impasse*. In very many cases, we find that officers, young and able officers, are posted to a station; but before they can learn their work there, before they understand the local conditions fully, they are transferred. As soon as they begin to get familiar with the surroundings, as soon as they know things about the place, they are suddenly whisked off. It is particularly true in the case of Subdivisional Officers. New officers who replace them meet in their turn the same fate. Nobody is allowed to settle down to work after acquiring the necessary preliminary experience. I may here give one example: In the sadar subdivision of the Faridpur district, three Subdivisional Officers have been placed one after another in the course of one year. If in this way an officer is changed every two or three or even six months, it is obvious that the administration will suffer, it is obvious that in an emergency like the present, conditions cannot improve but are bound to deteriorate. Again, Sir, we find that in the Goalundo subdivision in the Faridpur district, the Subdivisional Officer was ailing for some time; but he was not allowed any leave for a long time with the result that owing to his ailment he could not devote proper attention to the stupendous problems with which he was faced. Finally, on medical certificate, the Subdivisional Officer had to be allowed leave, but in the meantime two or three valuable months were lost. If a healthy and energetic officer had been there in his place at this time, he could have done better work. Then, Sir, I will refer to another case. In the Gopalganj subdivision, the Subdivisional Officer was suddenly transferred, and an officer can hardly do justice to himself when under orders of transfer. Government ask officers to make over charge without any officer taking his place. Madaripur is one of the heaviest subdivisions in Bengal. There, Sir, the famine conditions are appalling. The tragedy of the whole thing is that here also the Subdivisional Officer was transferred but no relieving officer sent. I believe that there is no Subdivisional Officer at all in Madaripur. It will be seen that the system of administration is bad. That is a charge which Government must face. They are drawing up only paper schemes; they have done lots on paper, many schemes have been formulated on paper. If officers are not there, these schemes cannot be put into effect. These are some of the defects of the general system of the administration. I will now speak about one case of vindictive behaviour,—I use a harsh word—vindictive—in connection with a case in which an officer who was about to retire within two months was suddenly transferred to Chittagong and when he asked for leave it was not granted. This meant giving him additional allowances, for Chittagong is a non-family area. The present Ministry was thus prepared to waste public money in sending him there, paying his travelling allowances and additional allowances and also the travelling allowances of the man who was bound to relieve him in the course of a couple of months! I must say that this transfer has been effected simply to satisfy the grudge of the members of

the Ministry or of some members who support this Ministry. But, Sir, these are cases into which we need not go in detail.

Sir, the appalling picture that we see around us everyday is sufficiently serious to draw the attention of all members of this House. Here we are faced with a situation where there is no room for controversy. Starvation and death is running rampant in Bengal. In Faridpur Sadar, we have now a Collector who is trying his level best to tackle the situation but his activities are hampered considerably on account of the lack of adequate supply of foodgrains. I have recently toured in different parts of the province and I have found that everywhere the same cry of lack of supply of foodgrains exists. Sir, Government have issued orders and circulars to the Collectors of districts to deal with the situation. Sir, how can food come simply by the issue of orders and circulars unless stocks of foodgrains are made available there? I would like the Hon'ble Minister to tell us what amount of actual foodgrains has been sent to the districts and what arrangements have been made for their distribution in different areas which are most needy. To this question Government must give an answer if they are not to be charged with failure in their duties. Sir, in course of the last month, the month of August, in the municipal area of Faridpur, 34 deaths from starvation were reported. If the reported number is 34, the actual number must have been much greater. Again, Sir, in course of the first fortnight of this month there have been 72 deaths in the municipal area of Faridpur alone in spite of the fact that local arrangements have been able to save the lives of 200 persons who would otherwise have died. Sir, unless medical relief is organised on a larger scale, unless more foodgrains are made available there, all these local efforts, whether official or non-official, are bound to fail and therefore it is the incumbent duty of this Government to give this question of relief precedence over all other questions.

(The honourable member reached the time-limit and was allowed two minutes to finish his speech.)

Sir, I heard only yesterday that a Jute Assistant Inspector had been murdered in one of the *thanas* of Madaripur when he was trying to control the price of rice in a *hat*. Sir, I have no doubt that Government will punish the men who may be responsible for such a crime. But, I would suggest to Government that it will not meet the situation if only punishment is meted out and at the same time food is not made available to this locality. I would conclude with a reference to the position of the District School Board in Faridpur. The position is that if Government do not give proper and adequate supplies, if Government do not make sufficient funds available, the District School Board will cease to function. It will not be a matter of credit for the Education Minister who himself comes from that district, that some four thousand teachers should be thrown out of employment simply because the Government of which he is a member have not made supplies available to the district from which he comes.

Mr. MUNGTURAM JAIPURIA then addressed the House in Hindi.

Rai Bahadur KESHAB CHANDRA BANERJI: Mr. President, Sir, I feel that within the limited time at my disposal it is hardly possible for me

to do full justice to the subject-matter for today's discussion, namely, Budget. So I propose to confine my remarks to two or three points only. I shall first deal with the question of the imposition of a tax on agricultural income. I think, I speak subject to correction, that the yield from the proposed taxation is expected to be about Rs. 30 lakhs. The Government of Bengal would have done well to explore other sources of revenue before embarking upon a legislation of this kind. It is well-known, Sir, that the Floud Commission in their report suggested the imposition of a tax on agricultural income as a temporary measure but from the Statement of Objects and Reasons for this proposed legislation it appears that the Government is anxious to place the Bill permanently on the Statute Book. The previous Ministry adopted the policy of the State-purchase of zemindaries. It is unfortunate that the present Ministry should have thought fit completely to change the policy laid down by their predecessors so soon after assumption of office. I think, Sir, that the time is hardly opportune for the imposition of a tax like this. We have already had several taxation measures such as the Entertainment Tax, Betting Tax, Electricity Duty and Sales Tax. There is ample scope for getting more revenue from these sources. The next question which is uppermost in my mind, and to which several speakers have already referred, is the importance of taking stringent measures with regard to the food situation. In this connection, I would refer to the anti-hoarding drive and the food census initiated by the Government in July last. In my opinion, all this had the effect of driving the stocks underground. Government's announcement to initiate the drive had been made long before it was actually undertaken in the different districts of Bengal. I think a confidential circular to the District Officers should have been issued by the Ministry, because those who were interested in the matter had sufficient time to remove their stocks and I doubt whether there were big stocks at all in an ordinary household. The exclusion of Calcutta and Howrah in the first instance from the operation was fundamentally wrong. Unfortunately, the Home Minister is not now present in the House, because I wanted to make one or two observations with regard to the Civic Guard organisation. At page 7 of the Hon'ble the Finance Minister's statement I find that there is an increase of Rs. 27 lakhs under Police more than half of which is due to the supplementary dearness allowance and the balance to such items as reorganisation of civic guards, emergency areas bonus and increased charges for clothing and equipment. Our experience is very bitter in this matter. I happen to be very closely associated with the civic guard organisation in the district of Dacca. While the Government officers, Police, A.R.P. personnel and others are getting foodstuffs at reduced rates, nothing has been done in spite of repeated representations to supply foodstuffs to the Civic Guards. I brought this matter to the notice of the district authorities who in their turn wrote to the Government to expedite sanction but to no effect. The Civic Guard movement has been initiated by the Government of India to help the Police, in maintaining internal peace. In fact, the Civic Guards are regarded as auxiliary to the police. They have to do practically police

duties and are invested with all the powers of the police; but it is regrettable that nothing is being done to supply them with basic rations at controlled rates. Sir, the next point to which I should like to draw the attention of Government is the lack of equipment and other paraphernalia such as torches, whistles, raincoats etc. which are very necessary if the Civic Guards are to do their duty properly. Sir, the Civic Guards have to do night duty thereby relieving the police for most part of the night. A system of food control has been introduced in various districts in Bengal, but in my district at any rate the Civic Guards have been hard put to it on account of the absence of adequate facilities. Sir, as I have already said, a representation was made to Government last year, but unfortunately we do not know what happened to it. A deputation on behalf of the Civic Guards waited on the Hon'ble the Home Minister when he visited Dacca recently but the result is still unknown to us. Hitherto our cry has been one in the wilderness.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: Sir, I shall say a few words in connection with one or two observations made by the honourable members of this House regarding matters relating to the Agriculture Department. I should first deal with Mr. Roy Chowdhury's observation regarding the fact that Bengal has not been affected by war and that this famine condition is not due to war. Sir, he has quoted figures from which he wants to make out that there is no shortage of crops in Bengal. He says that Bengal had its normal food production of 80 million tons this year also. Sir, I do not know where from he has got his figures but the figures of the Agriculture Department show that the normal figure for paddy production of Bengal is 88 lakh tons a year whereas last year it was only 69 lakh tons. There was thus a deficit to the extent of nearly 23 per cent. Then, Sir, he has compared Bengal with Assam and he has said that if Assam can go on in spite of war conditions without being very much affected by scarcity or distress, why should Bengal be suffering so much on account of war? Sir, he makes an initial mistake. Assam is a surplus province whereas Bengal normally is a deficit province. But normally we get only 88 lakh tons as against 100 tons which is our requirement. Bengal has always been on the starvation line even in normal years, and 50 per cent. of its population has to live on half ration for at least six months in the year. That is the normal position. So, even the slightest shortage affects Bengal very seriously, and that is the reason why we have been so much distressed on account of the shortage. War is responsible for the distress directly, Sir, because if there had been no war, we could have got as much rice as we wanted from Burma to meet our deficit. On account of these various causes, we had a shortage, a very big shortage of 23 per cent. As I have said, we could recoup if there had been no war and if we could get our supplies from Burma. We could not get that, that is why we are in such a precarious position. Mr. Roy Chowdhury had entirely neglected this aspect. Assam could carry on because it is a surplus province. It has more than the quantity of rice which it really requires.

Then, with regard to one observation made by my esteemed friend and Guru, Khan Bahadur Momin. I am very grateful to him for the personal

remarks he has made regarding me. I fully agree with him that the Agriculture Department has so far done very little, and this is due to a very large extent to Bengal's land system. The land system is such that agriculture has been nobody's concern. On account of the inelasticity of revenue Government never paid much attention to agriculture, because Government thought that it would not get any return for the money it would be spending on agriculture, and so Bengal was starved by Government. On an average Rs. 14 lakhs used to be spent on agriculture in a province like Bengal, whereas other major provinces which are far smaller in size and whose population are also far lesser ordinarily spent Rs. 30 to 40 lakhs on their Agriculture Department. Bengal was practically starved. Sir, the landlords did not pay much attention to agriculture because they knew they would get their rents all right, whether there was any improvement in agriculture or not. So, Sir, they did not pay much attention, and the agriculturists themselves were too poor to do anything towards agricultural improvement. So, the result was that agriculture was nobody's concern. Bengal suffered, and practically its agriculture has been entirely neglected. But, Sir, we are now determined to do something definitely, and as the saying goes "there is a silver lining in the cloud". This distress and this food shortage have their redeeming features in the fact that they have drawn not only the attention of the Government but of the public to the necessity of agricultural development in Bengal. Sir, we have spent a very large amount of money this year for agricultural improvement, but I confess that it has not been spent as usefully as it could have been, if proper and systematic arrangements had been made beforehand. We assumed charge of office only a few months ago, and we had no time left to make necessary arrangements according to our own desire; we had practically to make the best of a bad job. Sir, we have spent a very large amount of money this year, and next year also we wish to spend as much, but according to a systematic and methodical plan. The Department also requires complete overhauling, and I am determined to see that the Department is placed on a proper basis so that it may do real good to the people of the country. May Allah help us in our endeavour! Sir, we are also determined to push on vigorously and systematically the "Grow More Food" campaign, and for this purpose we have decided to create an organisation whose business it will be to see that the instructions that are issued from the Department do not remain on paper only but are translated into action; there must be some men going about and seeing that our instructions about improvements are actually carried out and we may know what improvements have been actually effected and by how much we have increased the food production of the country. If we succeed in doing this then we will probably be able to say that this war and the distress through which we are now passing was a blessing in disguise.

Alhadj Khan Bahadur SHAIKH MUHAMMAD JAN: Mr. President, Sir, I do not think I have much to say either against or in favour of the budget presented by the Hon'ble the Finance Minister, Mr. T. C. Goswami, for the year 1943-44 as his baby has the same ugly features and uneven shape as the last one of the previous Ministry which was

fortunately or unfortunately killed by the Speaker of the Assembly, though it was brought up by Sir John Herbert with great care and attention like a motherless child and was subsequently adopted by the present Ministry as his free gift. Consequently, Mr. Goswami had no other alternative but to conceive again in more difficult circumstances with the result that there is a deficit of 7½ crores on revenue account with closing indebtedness of 14 crores, unheard of before even in the darkest days in Bengal of the Meston Settlement memory. This shows bad times have taken over the province from all sides thereby illustrating the old proverb "adversity does not come alone". The worst of famines is raging from one end of the country to another without any substantial relief to the people and in spite of relief works undertaken by many philanthropic agencies people are dying of hunger and starvation by hundreds and thousands every day. Dead bodies are being burnt or buried without any distinction of religion or religious rites performed. Epidemic diseases due to malnutrition are taking their own share of mortality in staggering numbers and those who are left after going through this hell of sufferings are packs of bones in rags that we come across every day in Calcutta. As if this was not enough, a powerful enemy is strongly entrenched on the border of Bengal, and of all the people of India the people of Bengal are to suffer these hardships at the hands of the enemy when the armed forces of the United Nations operate from this terrain to attack Burma. In my opinion the present famine due to shortage of crops, epidemic diseases and hardships of the war are all a passing phase but if the present economic conditions of the province is not improved and the Central Government does not come to our rescue by giving long-term loans on minimum interest, by granting subventions as it was done in the case of the Bihar Earthquake and by conceding the net proceeds of the whole of the export duty on jute grown in this province, Bengal will emerge out of this war completely ruined with a very heavy millstone of debts round its neck and it will be long before it can recover economically. All post-war reconstruction schemes and establishment of cottage industries on a large scale will have to be shelved for a long time after the war with the result that the purchasing capacity of the people which is already very low will deteriorate still further. I may go further and say that even political aspirations of the people of this province if realised after the war in the shape of a United India or of Pakistan will have little effect upon the ill-fed, ill-clad, half-naked, ill-nourished Bengalees, both Hindus and Mussalmans.

There is no doubt that the present Ministry will leave no stone unturned to bring home to the India Government the absolute necessity of helping this province with sufficient funds at this grave crisis. But I have grave doubts if they will succeed unless there is united demand from this province and this is only possible if petty party frictions come to an end immediately and an All-Party Government is established in Bengal enjoying the confidence of all communities. Appeals and importunities will have little effect upon the Government of India as it is at present constituted, though two Bengalees of great reputation adorn the Viceroy's Cabinet and this can be fully borne out by the fact that Bengal has not so far received any big

loan from the Centre. Therefore, a new approach is necessary to make the Government of India understand and relent and that approach is no other than the unanimous demand of the Hindu and Mussalman and European Communities backed with some form of direct action.

I will ask my friends occupying the Treasury Benches not to be carried away by party affiliations at this hour of common calamity. It is my confirmed opinion that India can never attain real independence unless Hindus and Musalmans are honestly united. Similarly, Bengal cannot recover from the present economic distress unless people of Bengal are united and sink their differences at least for the present, if not for all time, and establish a real National Government comprising all parties, Muslim League, Congress, Mahasabha, Krishak-Proja and others, all joined together with singleness of purpose and iron determination to extricate our province from the economic morass in which we find her today. I have reason to believe that this temporary unity may lead to permanent unity in India and reconciliation between the two great communities and thus once more we may show to the world with legitimate pride that what Bengal thinks today, India may think tomorrow.

Mr. DHIRENDRA LAL BARUA: Mr. President, Sir, the Budget for the current year which is now before this House for discussion, has been discussed threadbare in its manifold aspects and from different points of view. I need not reiterate and dilate upon the points already raised and discussed. I will confine my observations only to two points that are of vital importance to my home district, Chittagong and to the Buddhist community of which I am the only representative in the Legislature.

As to the first point, I should observe, with a feeling of satisfaction that the havoc caused to the lives and properties and the distress brought in its train by the cyclone and tidal wages in the two districts of Midnapore and 24-Parganas have found wide publicity in India and abroad through the newspapers and public meetings. The same has been mentioned also in the statement made by the Hon'ble the Finance Minister in presenting the Budget Estimates under discussion. Without grudging all this in the least, one like me cannot but feel wonder that public attention has hardly been drawn to the silent but terrible distress of the people of Chittagong and the sister district of Noakhali arising partly from large influx of evacuees from Burma and Further India, financially ruined and literally penniless, partly from the dislocation of trade and traffic due to the war situation and repeated enemy action, and mainly from the scarcity of essential foodstuffs and the outbreak of malaria, dysentery and cholera in an epidemic form. The District Magistrate and other high officials who are supposed to be intimately acquainted with the people of Chittagong, Hindus or Muslims, Buddhists or Christians, Military authorities, nay even the casual visitors who have toured through the district, cannot help, I daresay, bearing a glowing testimony to the high morale, courage and fortitude of the people of the border district which is not only situated in the war zone but is liable to enemy attack and invasion. What special sum or sums have been provided in the Budget, I should like to know, to save the people of this

district from starvation and death that are staring them in the face. From a personal and intimate knowledge of the terrible plight which confronts them I can inform this House that unless both the Government and the public co-operate in sending abundant quantities of foodstuffs, medicines, diet, 50,000 of starving and half-starving people will die at the onset of the next winter, not to speak of those who have already died during the past three months, whose number one need not be astonished, may exceed half a lakh. If anything is to be done, it should be done immediately, without the least delay.

The most regrettable feature of this unprecedented situation is that the education of the children who are to be the worthy citizens of the reconstructed world, is being greatly hampered. The Buddhist Emperor, Asoka, rightly observed when he said that the worst feature of a war of aggression is that it greatly affects the cause of culture and civilisation.

As regards the second point, my heart is filled with anguish when I have to say that since 1940 I have been asking the popular Ministry of Bengal to make a statutory provision for the higher, general and technical education of the Buddhist students with suitable hostel arrangements in Calcutta and Chittagong, to ensure an all-round progress of the Buddhists who form one of the minority communities of this province. But so far I have cried in the wilderness. Every popular Ministry in India is pledged to safeguard the interests of the minorities. I asked just for a petty sum of Rs. 20,000 which was nothing but a drop in the ocean. Why have I been denied so far a proper response to this legitimate demand? It is a matter of common knowledge that the Buddhists of the province are but few remnants of a people who were, not many centuries ago, the founders of several universities and colleges in Eastern India, particularly in Bengal. The Buddhists of the province may be numerically a small minority, but even as followers of a great religion, they are entitled to your sympathy and ıcouragement. But without any further indulgence in sentiment I ld respectfully draw your attention to certain relevant facts for your ıetic consideration. The financial condition of the Buddhists has lerably deteriorated during the war by the ruinous evacuation of many businessmen and owners of landed properties from Burma. To add misfortune, they are mostly concentrated in the districts of Chitta- l Chittagong Hill-tracts. I, therefore, earnestly appeal to the e Chief Minister as well as to his worthy colleagues to make a ision for Buddhist education in the next budget, by which they rendering an inestimable service to the community for all time

ıGENDRA NATH MOHALANABIS: Mr. President, Sir, the of the discussion of the budget in this House is merely to take a l's eye view of the financial position of the Government, for we cannot possibly influence the expenses or influence the budget items; but I think that the powers that be will be pleased to take notice of the views of the members of this House expressed in connection with the budget discussion and take such action as they may be pleased to take. Now, Sir, in this

budget presented by the Hon'ble the Finance Minister we find that there has been no attempt to explain the profit that was derived by trading on wheat. We find that there is no attempt to explain the real reasons for this abnormal food crisis nor is there any real attempt to deal with the situation. But the expenditure of Rs. 3½ crores for the purpose of relieving the distress is simply a palliative and my submission would be that the Government as a whole should have put their heads together to find out the real reasons of this distress and to devise means to avoid a recurrence of this. But if the way in which Government is proceeding, is continued, there will be no end of debts of this Government. You cannot go on feeding several crores of people by borrowing, and unless you stop the high prices, well, this Government is sure to go bankrupt by this sort of financing, by this sort of feeding people at high prices. Now, if you actually try to analyse the reasons for this abnormal condition in Bengal—I am prepared to make certain allowances owing to the war conditions, owing to flood and other natural calamities—you will see that the real cause is undue pressure placed on the market by abnormal buying by the Government and other agencies who are being supported by Government. That, I think, ought to be done away with, and for the next crop Government should take steps to see that there is no such undue pressure on the market, that Government supply of foodstuffs to its employees is stopped, and that prices are rigorously put down at a reasonable figure, say, Rs. 6 or Rs. 8 or Rs. 10 a maund; they should then requisition the whole stock and do away with profiteers and black-marketers. Sir, it has been admitted in the statement of the Hon'ble the Finance Minister that under existing circumstances black-market is inevitable. I submit, Sir, that the tendency is inevitable, but not the black-market. Government can check it and ought to check it ruthlessly. Unless Government check the black-market, well, the position would be exactly the same next year as you are finding it today.

The Hon'ble Mr. TULSI CHANDRA GOSWAMI: Mr. President, Sir, it gives some satisfaction to the Finance Minister, even in these extraordinary circumstances, to find that the framework and the general scheme of his budget have not been seriously called into question. have said before, the grave question, in fact the only important qu which is engaging the attention of Government today is the relief of distress, and I hope I have succeeded in making it amply my Budget statement that Government is fully alive to its grateful, in fact the Government in its entirety is grateful, to the cr offered in this House, and they will all be seriously taken into tion. The question of inflation has been seriously raised by my friend Mr. Laidlaw. In fact, that is a question of such great diffic it is impossible for me in a few words even to explain its implicatio am grateful to the honourable member for the suggestions he has but I am afraid my honourable friend Mr. K. C. Roy Chowdhury was off the mark when he started speaking on inflation. I think I can answer Mr. K. C. Roy Chowdhury by just one sentence that inflation as an economic phenomenon is a general condition. He seemed to think that inflation belonged to particular groups of people. Sir, I shall not dilate on the point,

and I am quite certain that Mr. Roy Chowdhury is not conversant with the subject he was dealing with. There is the question of corruption which has been raised. Wild allegations have been made on the floor of the House. At the same time, I cannot but respectfully take notice of the remarks made by Khan Bahadur Momin; although he has made charges of corruption, yet at any rate he has given us some indication as to how it can be combated. I wish to tell the House that it is not the policy of this Government to stand corruption or to encourage corruption in any way. Honourable members of this House may have already noted that prosecutions have been started against officers suspected of corruption and other measures of an administrative character are being taken to prevent corruption. Mr. Moazzemali Chowdhury also spoke about corruption but in less unrestrained language. It is easy to speak of rooting out corruption but this corruption started some years ago and we are now legatees to a form of corruption which, I think, will take a little time to remedy.

Then there is one small question raised about the Commercial Museum. I understand from my colleague in charge of this department that the whole question about this Commercial Museum is being considered by him. There is also the question of additional revenue from Excise. I may point out that the entire additional Excise revenue of Bengal, that is to say, the difference between 18 crores and 16 crores, is due to extraordinary circumstances. It is an inflated increase and that is reflected in the increase in the Excise revenue. After all, the increase in the Excise revenue is due to two factors: firstly, to the presence of people in Bengal today who are not ordinarily the residents of this province; secondly, because the tax on liquor was increased for the twofold purpose of discouraging drinking and of keeping down the surplus purchasing power. I think the Government have followed a policy which is consistent both with the canons of public revenue and the canons of social morality. There is also one other question, namely, the question of political prisoners. That is a question on which only the other day the Hon'ble the Chief Minister made a very lucid and frank statement. I can hardly improve on that statement; t of all, because that statement was frank and lucid and secondly he is in a better position than myself,—he is in a more authoritative than myself,—to deal with the matter. I may assure the House policy about the release of political prisoners which Sir Nazimuddin iated on our taking over office has not been departed from. We steadfastly following the policy and in co-operation and co-ordina- ith each other. If there has been a certain amount of slowing ieve me that it was due to certain special causes. It is the policy rnment to release as many political prisoners under our control as is ent with general safety. I need not say anything more on this nt, but I wish just to say one thing which was probably lost sight of by my honourable friends. It is this: that the entire structure of the budget provisions relating to the nation-building departments remains the same and has not been altered since the budget was presented in March last. We have not curtailed any expenditure on nation-building work. On the other hand, directly and indirectly we have helped nation-building

in all additional projects of expenditure. For instance, with regard to the primary school teachers, a considerable amount of dearness allowance has already been sanctioned and I believe in some cases paid. To some extent the nation-building departments must suffer but it should be the policy of every honest Government to see as far as possible that education and sanitation chiefly are not neglected on the plea of war. On the contrary, in order to strengthen the morale, in order to keep the nation mentally and physically fit to bear the rigour of the war, it is necessary that these institutions should be kept in a vital condition. I assure the House, Sir, that nothing has been spared within our resources to keep alive our nation-building activities. The grant to different institutions has not been curtailed by one penny and I think we have reasons to congratulate ourselves on the fact that we have, in spite of our difficulties, been able to recommend for the sanction of the Legislatures sums that were considered necessary in March last. Certain things have since been changed. Then, Sir, another question was raised about the subvention from the Government of India. I would like to tell this House that we are in correspondence with the Government of India and I am not in a position to say very much more; but I am thankful to those honourable members who have suggested that an outright subvention from the Government of India is desirable and equitable. It would be very difficult on our part to demand of the Government of India assistance of a more consolidated character than would be forthcoming. It would not be proper for me to say anything more than just to say that that case will be pressed at the proper time and in the proper quarter. Again, Sir, I thank the members of this House for having given Government valuable suggestions and I give this assurance that the suggestions will be respectfully co-ordinated.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The House stands adjourned till 9 a.m. tomorrow.

Adjournment.

The Council then adjourned till 9 a.m. on Wednesday, the 22nd September, 1943.

Members Absent.

The following members were absent from the meeting held on the 21st September, 1943:—

(1) Khan Bahadur Naziruddin Ahmad.
(2) Mr. Hamidul Huq Chowdhury.
(3) Mr. Kamini Kumar Datta.
(4) Mr. Mohammed Hossain.
(5) Maulana Muhammad Akrum Khan.
(6) Mr. Naresh Nath Mookerjee.
(7) Mr. Ranajit Pal Chowdhury.
(8) Mr. R. S. Purssell.
(9) Khan Bahadur Kazi Abdur Rashid.
(10) Dr. Kumud Sankar Ray.
(11) Dr. Kasiruddin Talukdar.

BGP-43/4-6485A-750

BENGAL LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DEBATES

Third Session, 1943—No. 5.

THE COUNCIL met in the Legislative Chamber of the Legislative Building, Calcutta, on Wednesday, the 22nd September, 1943, at 9 a.m., being the fifth day of the Third Session of 1943, persuant to section 62(2)(a) of the Government of India Act, 1935.

Mr. President (the Hon'ble Sir BIJOY PRASAD SINGH ROY, K.C.I.E.) was in the Chair.

Reply to the Message from the Council regarding Sir John Herbert's illness.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. In reply to the message of sympathy sent on your behalf by me to His Excellency Sir John Herbert, I have received the following reply from his Private Secretary:—

> "I am desired to acknowledge and thank you for your letter dated the 16th September, 1943, and to say that His Excellency Sir John Herbert deeply appreciates the kind message of sympathy on behalf of the members of the Bengal Legislative Council."

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Sir, I want to draw you attention to one fact. In reply to the budget discussion the Hon'ble the Finance Minister replied to the point as regards the release of political prisoners but, Sir, nothing was said and no assurance was given regarding the question of family provision for the detenus. So, Sir, I want an assurance from the Hon'ble the Home Minister with regard to this point.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am afraid that question cannot arise today, and I cannot allow you to discuss it. Now we shall take up questions.

Short-notice question.

Mr. MESBAHUDDIN AHMED: Sir, there was no question paper placed on the table today.

Mr. PRESIDENT: No fresh questions will be taken up today. We shall take up only those questions which were fixed for reply yesterday.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Sir, even yesterday there was no question.

Mr. KRISHNA CHANDRA ROY CHOWDHURY: May I suggest, Sir, that the Secretary may read the questions for the benefit of those who have not got their copies?

Mr. PRESIDENT: What is the point in Secretary's reading the questions? In view of the fact that the members have not got the questions with them today I will not take up the questions today. I would request the honourable members to bring the questions on the next day.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTY: As the questions were not taken up, the papers were left on the table, so we have not got copies.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Once they are placed on the table, they become the property of the members. I refer the honourable members to the instructions at the bottom of the question papers—"Due to the extreme shortage of paper, members are requested to bring this copy for their use in the Chamber until all the questions are disposed of".

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTY: It would have been better if the Department had taken away the questions and then redistributed them.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Department cannot take away the questions when they have been distributed to members. Some, I believe, took them away; others left them on the table. How could the Department go on collecting these question papers? However, for the convenience of the House copies of these questions will be placed on the table tomorrow.

Mr. BIREN ROY (Parliamentary Secretary): Sir, on behalf of the Hon'ble the Finance Minister, I wish to make a statement by way of reply to one of the short-notice questions regarding the question of the payment of daily allowance and travelling allowance to members for the period commencing from the 24th March, 1943, till the prorogation of the Council. Now, it has been held by the Accountant-General that for the period the Council did not sit, that is from the 31st March till 24th April, 1943, when His Excellency the Governor practically took over himself all the duties of the Council, the Chamber could not properly be called to be in session. But it has been suggested that as Government are desirous, on equitable grounds, to grant daily allowance to the members of the Legislature during the period of suspension of the Constitution, if the conditions under section 10 of the Members, Emoluments Act are otherwise satisfied, fresh orders will be issued, and that pretty soon during the session, granting travelling as well as daily allowance to members for the period in question on grounds of equity, and arrangements are being made for the issue of such orders within a week.

The Bengal Vagrancy Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: We will now take up the Bengal Vagrancy Bill, 1943.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: Sir, in the absence of the Minister in charge, may I be permitted to move the motion?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Yes.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: Sir, I beg to move that the Bengal Vagrancy Bill, 1943, may be taken into consideration.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: In view of the agreement that has been reached between parties and as a special case, without treating it as a precedent, I do not move the amendment standing in my name.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: Mr. President, it was settled at our conference that they will clarify certain points with regard to the Bill——

Mr. PRESIDENT: The House has nothing to do with what transpired in your conference. Either you support the motion or you oppose it. The House is not expected to know what transpired behind the scenes.

Mr. NUR AHMED: I rise to support the motion moved by the Hon'ble Minister in charge of Agriculture on behalf of the Hon'ble Minister for Public Health and Local Self-Government. It is a very useful and beneficial measure which has been brought before the House. Sir, social services rendered by the State are very meagre in India. This is a piece of social legislation which can do something to ease the distress of that unfortunate class of human beings who are styled as beggars. But from reading the Statement of Objects and Reasons for the Bill, I find that it is not only the humanitarian point of view that had induced the former Ministry to frame this Bill, but consideration of health of this second city in the British Empire, namely, Calcutta, was also one of the reasons for the introduction of this Bill. The Bill as it now stands is very limited in scope. In the first instance, it will apply to Calcutta and its suburbs and if necessary to the other district towns of Bengal. The provisions of the Bill are also very limited and are very much restricted in character and will give very little relief to the class for which it is framed. We are said to be partners of the great Commonwealth of British Nations. Sir, in England and other Western countries of which this great Commonwealth consists, there is ample provision for the relief of human sufferings in almost all forms. There are, for example, the Old Age Pensions, the Insurance for Invalids, etc. There is also the Unemployment Insurance Fund for those who are thrown out of employment at any stage of their lives. In every parish in England, and also in every area within the jurisdiction of a County Council there is a Poor House and a rest house where the poor can take shelter and get lodging and boarding. But India unfortunately stands on a different footing, though it is said to be part of that great Commonwealth of Nations. This Ministry and the former Ministry deserve real thanks of all for bringing this humane measure before the House. But I submit that the definition of the word "vagrant", as given in the Bill, will give rise to difficulties; it seems to be very vague. Sir, I hope the provisions of this beneficial measure will be extended to Dacca and Chittagong and other towns gradually. With this hope, I support the motion for the consideration of the Bill.

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHOLANABISH: Sir, with regard to the principle of the Bill, we are all agreed that a Bill of this nature should be passed. I do not know if it is the proper time for me to discuss in detail one or two items in the Bill. Although I agree with the principle, I think

there are provisions which require amendment and it may be necessary for me to move amendments.

Mr. PRESIDENT: You need not go into details now.

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHOLANABISH: All right, Sir. So far as the principle of the Bill is concerned, I heartily support it. With regard to one or two points only, I want to move amendments. If those points could be mutually discussed and Government could accept our suggestions, I think the Bill could be passed without any controversy or opposition.

Mr. K. C. ROY CHOWDHURY: Sir, I offer my hearty congratulations on this measure, though belated.

Those who are and were in the Corporation and outside know how acute is this problem of beggars in Calcutta and to what extent we were able to go into the matter. I think the Hon'ble President was a member of the Corporation in those days when we discussed the question of vagrants. The introduction of a Bill of this kind is most opportune. These vagrants are between the devil and the deep sea: people cannot give alms now-a-days—rice is not available, copper pice does not exist, change is not available. So, I think in these circumstances every member of this House should whole-heartedly congratulate the Government for bringing in a Bill like this. I have no doubt that this Bill will be passed without any controversy or discussion.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: In view of what has fallen from the other members of this House, on behalf of my party I offer my whole-hearted support to this Bill. As suggested by Mr. Moholanabish I should also like to have clarification on certain points. The first point relates to some difficulty as regards the definition of the word "vagrant"——

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: Those points will arise at the time of the consideration of the Bill, clause by clause.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Yes, that would be the proper course. I expected that Government would make a clear statement explaining the principles of the Bill. Government, I am afraid, have made it too informal and thereby made it difficult for the House to follow the principle of the Bill.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: You, Sir, have exactly represented our views.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The question before the House is: that the Bengal Vagrancy Bill, 1943, be taken into consideration.

(The motion was agreed to.)

Mr. PRESIDENT: The time for sending amendments to the clauses of this Bill is 11 a.m. on Friday next.

The House now stands adjourned till 9 a.m. tomorrow.

Adjournment.

The Council then adjourned till 9 a.m. on Thursday, the 23rd September, 1943.

Members Absent.

The following members were absent from the meeting held on the 22nd September, 1943:—

(1) Khan Bahadur Naziruddin Ahmad.
(2) Khan Sahib Fariduddin Ahmed.
(3) Mr. Hamidul Huq Chowdhury.
(4) Mrs. Labanyaprobha Dutt.
(5) Mr Kamini Kumar Dutta.
(6) Mr. Mohamed Hossain.
(7) Mr. M. R. Jaipuria.
(8) Maulana Muhammad Akrum Khan.
(9) Mr. W. B. G. Laidlaw.
(10) Mr. J. McFarlane.
(11) Khan Bahadur Abdul Momin.
(12) Mr. Naresh Nath Mookerji.
(13) Mr. T. B. Nimmo.
(14) Mr. R. S. Purssell.
(15) Khan Bahadur Kazi Abdur Rashid.
(16) Dr. K. S. Ray.
(17) Dr. Kasiruddin Talukdar.

BGP-4314-6484A-750

BENGAL LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DEBATES

Third Session, 1943—No. 6.

THE COUNCIL met in the Legislative Chamber of the Legislative Building, Calcutta, on Thursday, the 23rd September, 1943, at 9 a.m., being the sixth day of the Third Session of 1943, pursuant to section 62(2)(a) of the Government of India Act, 1935.

Mr. President (the Hon'ble Sir BIJOY PRASAD SINGH ROY, K.C.I.E.) was in the Chair.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Non-Agricultural Tenancy Bill.

22. Khan Sahib ABDUL AZIZ: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Revenue Department be pleased to state if it is a fact that a comprehensive Non-Agricultural Tenancy Bill was framed and published in the *Calcutta Gazette* by the Government of Bengal.

(*b*) If so, do the Government propose to proceed with the said Bill?

(*c*) On what date shall the present Bengal Non-Agricultural Tenancy (Temporary Provisions) Act, 1940, expire?

MINISTER in charge of the REVENUE DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Mr. Tarak Nath Mukerjea): (*a*) Yes.

(*b*) The provisions of the Bill are under fresh examination. Government propose to introduce a Bill as soon as possible.

(*c*) On the 29th May, 1944.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Arising out of (*b*), may I know when the Government propose to introduce this Bill?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: As soon as possible.

Mr. NUR AHMED: By the next session?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: I cannot give any definite assurance about the date, but I can only say that a Bill will be introduced as soon as possible, but by the Judicial Department.

Requisition of houses for military purposes.

27. Mr. NUR AHMED: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Revenue Department be pleased to state if it is a fact that many houses and buildings owned or occupied by the civil population have been requisitioned by the military by exercise of special power under the India Defence Act and Rules in Chittagong and Calcutta?

(*b*) If so, have the Government of Bengal accepted any obligation and responsibility to find accommodation for the civil population thus displaced or dispossessed? If not, why not?

(*c*) Is he aware that in many cases owners and occupiers are given very short notices to vacate their houses and buildings and they have to vacate the same to great inconveniences and hardships?

(*d*) If so, have the Government of Bengal made any rules or issued any circular to local district officials to see that the civil population who are required to vacate their houses are not unnecessarily harassed and put into difficulties?

(*e*) If not, do the Government propose to issue instructions to the local officials?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: (*a*) Yes.

(*b*) In cases of requisition or evacuation of large areas, Government give all possible assistance to the displaced civil population in finding accommodation.

In Calcutta an organisation has been set up for supplying people with information regarding available accommodation in the City.

(*c*) As long notice as is possible in the circumstances is given in all cases. Time is frequently extended to avoid hardship.

(*d*) Yes.

(*e*) Does not arise.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Arising out of (*b*), will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state, in view of large influx of evacuees into Chittagong, whether he is prepared to set up a similar committee in Chittagong like that set up in Calcutta?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: Government will certainly consider the matter.

MR. NUR AHMED: Arising out of (*c*), will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state whether it is a fact that sometimes only oral notices are given?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: Government is not aware of it.

Press Workers.

28. Mr. KRISHNA CHANDRA ROY CHOWDHURY: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Commerce, Labour and Industries Department be pleased to state whether it is a fact that the Labour Commissioner, Bengal, met a Conference and discussed certain matters concerning dearness allowance, supply of foodstuffs at cheaper rate, increase of wage and occupational diseases, etc., of Press workers with the Master Printers' Association on the 21st June, 1943? If so, what are the results of the Conference?

(*b*) Is it a fact that there has been a considerable increase in the percentage of the occupational disease, lead-poisoning, among the Press workers for want of adequate nourishment? If so, what preventive steps have the Government so far taken or propose to take in future? If no such steps have been taken or are proposed to be taken, what is the reason therefor?

(*c*) If the reply to part (*b*) be in the affirmative, do the Government propose to arrange for the examination of the workers of different Presses by the Certified Surgeon of the Government and to compensate the diseased workers according to the provisions of the Workmen's Compensation Act? If not, why not?

(*d*) Will the Hon'ble Minister please state the total number of cases of lead-poisoning during the last three years including those pending before the Compensation Court up to June, 1943?

(*e*) Will the Hon'ble Minister please state the number of strikes and trade disputes with number of workers affected in the Printing industry during 1942 and 1943 up to June?

Mr. BIREN ROY, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (on behalf of the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Commerce, Labour and Industries Department): (*a*) Yes, but the meeting was held on the 22nd and not on the 21st June, 1943. This conference being a private arrangement its proceedings are confidential and cannot be published without the consent of the Master Printers' Association.

(*b*) No. From the examinations carried out by the Certifying Surgeon of Factories, there does not appear to have been any considerable increase in the percentage of lead-poisoning cases, whether acute or chronic, amongst Press workers and due to lack of adequate nourishment. Furthermore no complaints have been received from Press workers on the latter account.

Workers are periodically advised to observe strict hygienic conditions with respect to the mouth and to clean their hands and nails by making use of the washing arrangements provided for them. If these precautions are strictly adhered to, the chances of lead-poisoning whether incipient or latent are very remote.

(*c*) Does not arise. Quarterly examinations of certain Presses and token examinations of the oldest workers of other Presses are being carried out by the Certifying Surgeon of Factories but no cases of lead-poisoning have been discovered which would be investigated for the purpose of establishing data necessary for claims under the Workmen's Compensation Act.

There have been one or two complaints from Press workers alleging lead-poisoning but they showed no clinical signs of infection.

(*d*) The number of cases of lead-poisoning in *all* factories in which the lead-poisoning hazard exists and which have been discovered by the Certifying Surgeon of Factories are as follows:—

Paint and Tinning Factories only.

			Cases.
1940	...	...	11
1942	...	...	117
1941	...	...	89

The total number of claims instituted before the Compensation Court for alleged lead-poisoning during the years 1940, 1941 and 1942 and the first half year of 1943 were 2, 5, 7 and 5, respectively.

(*e*) 1942—2 strikes, number of workers affected 338.

1943 (up to June)—3 strikes, number of workers affected 1,107.

Mr. KRISHNA CHANDRA ROY CHOWDHURY: With reference to (*e*), will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if in order to conciliate the strikers they have appointed a Conciliation Officer to look into the grievances of the strikers under the existing rules and ordinances?

Mr. BIREN ROY: As there is no strike at present, the Labour Commissioner deals with such things.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister please state whether on receipt of a complaint from any press worker about lead-poisoning special medical arrangements are made for treatment at Government expense?

Mr. BIREN ROY: The answer is there. No complaint has been received from any press worker about lead-poisoning.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Is there any arrangement for the medical treatment of these people?

Mr. BIREN ROY: Yes, they may be admitted to hospitals.

Cyclone in Western Bengal.

30. Rai Bahadur BROJENDRA MOHAN MAITRA (on behalf of Rai Bahadur Keshab Chandra Banerjee): (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Revenue Department be pleased to state whether it is a fact that a cyclone of very great intensity accompanied by heavy rain swept over several districts of Western Bengal on the 16th October last?

(*b*) Were all the rivers in these districts in spate due to the tidal bore, rain and force of wind?

(*c*) Is it a fact that in consequence of the cyclone and high tidal bore which broke into the mainland, considerable areas in the southern part of Midnapore and the 24-Parganas districts were devasted resulting in heavy loss of human lives and cattle and destruction of *kutcha* house?

(*d*) If the answers to above be in the affirmative, will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state the reasons for the delay in issuing a *communiqué* on the subject detailing the precise nature of the havoc caused by the cyclone and the steps taken by the Government to start relief operations in the effected areas?

(*e*) Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased further to state—

(*i*) when did the Government first come to know of these unfortunate happenings; and

(*ii*) whether volunteers from various social service organisations were prevented from going to the affected areas to give relief to the distressed?

(*f*) If the answer to part (*e*) (*ii*) is in the affirmative, will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state the reasons for it?

(*g*) Was any warning received by the district or subdivisional authorities from the Meteorological Department regarding the impending danger? If so, at what hour was it received by the different authorities and was it broadcast to the public?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: (*a*) Yes. The Contai and Tamluk subdivisions of the Midnapore district, the Diamond Harbour subdivision of the 24-Parganas district and a small portion of Howrah district have been affected seriously.

(*b*) All the rivers in the seriously affected areas.

(*c*) Yes.

(*d*) Delay was due to the breakdown of communications and the restriction upon publication of details imposed by considerations of military security.

(*e*) (*i*) On the 19th October, 1942.

(*ii*) No.

(*f*) Does not arise.

(*g*) It is understood that the Subdivisional Officers, Contai and Tamluk, received the warning through the Irrigation and Police Departments, respectively, after the cyclone had already started. Warning messages were received from the Meteorological Officer at Diamond Harbour Post Office at 6-30 a.m. on the 15th October, 1942, and also at 1-30 a.m. on the 16th October, 1942. At 6-30 a.m. of the same date warning was received of great danger. This was published immediately by hoisting a signal for great danger. Subsequently this signal was replaced by a more drastic signal. Similar action was taken at Namkhanas. Copies of telegrams from the Meteorological Office were sent on the morning of the 16th October, 1942, to the police and the Subdivisional Officer, Diamond Harbour, for local circulation.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Arising out of (*g*), will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state whether such Meteorological Office report was also sent to the District Magistrate and Subdivisional Officer, Alipore, at once?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: Yes.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if he is aware that the Meteorological report was duly circulated amongst the public concerned by beat of drum or otherwise?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: I am not definitely in possession of the news but I think it was done, as it is always done.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if he is aware that the hoisting of a flag or a signal is never understood by the illiterate masses who are mainly affected, this signal being mainly meant for navigation?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: It is well known to the local people.

Flood and cyclone in Diamond Harbour.

31. Mr. RANAJIT PAL CHOWDHURY: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Home Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) the reason or reasons for which the publication of the news of devastation caused by the cyclone and the flood in the Diamond Harbour subdivision on the 10th October, 1942, was withheld till the 2nd November, 1942; and

(*b*) the reason or reasons for which the name of the actual place or places devastated was not mentioned in the Press-note published by the Government?

Mr. BIREN ROY, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (on behalf of the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Home Department): In each case the reason would be found in the necessity to comply with the requirements dictated by considerations of military security.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state whether the civil officers were directed by the military authorities not to send the messages even to the Cabinet Ministers, and is it a fact that the civil officers never sent such messages to Calcutta or to the Ministers?

Mr. BIREN ROY: No, that is not the fact. Actually, the Home Department took the initiative as soon as it received the news on the 22nd of October.

Arrest of Sj. Shusil Kumar Banerjee.

32. Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Home Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) whether it is a fact that Sj. Shusil Kumar Banerjee, an employee of the Corporation of Calcutta, was arrested and detained in jail under rule 26 of the Defence of India Act and Rules since the 26th May to 5th December, 1941, and then restricted to his village home at Mahestola, district 24-Parganas, under Government order No. 9308-P., dated the 5th December, 1941;

(*b*) whether under Government order No. 785-Def., dated the 23rd January, 1943, the said Shusil Babu was brought to Calcutta and restricted within premises No. 9, Basanta Bose Road, Kalighat, from the 31st January, 1943, with permission only to go to his medical attendant for medical advice and treatment;

(*c*) whether it is a fact that his continued and continuous detention and restrictions have seriously told upon his health and mind and that he is a physical wreck suffering from insomnia, ear troubles and troubles from teeth, hernia and bleeding piles; and

(*d*) whether Government propose to consider the desirability of releasing him to enable him to regain his health, earn his livelihood and maintain his family; if not, what are the reasons of such refusal?

Mr. BIREN ROY, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (on behalf of the Hon'ble Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin): (*a*) Yes.

(*b*) No. In response to his petition to come to Calcutta for medical advice the order of restriction at Mahestola was temporarily suspended by Government order No. 785-Def., dated the 23rd January, 1943.

(*c*) He has from time to time complained of a number of ailments, but I have no reason to believe that his detention and restriction were responsible.

(*d*) All restriction orders against Babu Shusil Kumar Banerjee except the requirement to notify residence and change of residence have since been withdrawn.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister please state the data on which he formulates his conclusion contained in his reply to part (*c*) of the question?

Mr. BIREN ROY: It is not true, as is stated in the question, that the gentleman is now a physical wreck but Government have released him practically except that he has got to notify his residence and any change of residence.

Obscene advertisements.

33. Mr. NUR AHMED: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Home Department be pleased to state if he is aware of the growing resentment among the people of Bengal over the publication of obscene advertisements in some class of newspapers in Bengal on such matter as sex, birth-control and female diseases?

(*b*) If so, do the Government propose to stop the publication of such obscene advertisements in the newspapers in Bengal by suitable legislation or otherwise? If not, why not?

Mr. BIREN ROY, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (on behalf of the Hon'ble Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin): (*a*) No.

(*b*) Does not arise.

Mr. NUR AHMED: With reference to (*a*), have the Government made any enquiry into the matter?

Mr. BIREN ROY: The matter is engaging the attention of the All-India Newspapers Editors' Conference.

Mr. NUR AHMED: I want to know whether Government themselves have made any enquiry.

Mr. BIREN ROY: Government consider it expedient that it should be done voluntarily.

Schools in Calcutta and other areas.

34. Mr. NUR AHMED: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Education Department be pleased to state if he is aware that the high

schools and *madrasahs* in the emergency areas, such as Calcutta, Chittagong and Asansol, have been very much affected economically and financially owing to fall in school fees and other income?

(*b*) If so, what measures have been adopted and are being adopted by the Government of Bengal to give necessary relief to the teachers of these schools and *madrasahs* and also for the maintenance of their efficiency during the war?

(*c*) Is it a fact that deputation on behalf of the All-Bengal Teachers' Association waited upon the Hon'ble Minister for Education in July, 1943, and prayed for the preparation of a well-considered scheme for the relief and assistance to the teachers of the schools in the emergency areas and for the maintenance of their efficiency during the war time?

(*d*) If so, do the Government propose to draw up any such scheme? If not, why not?

MINISTER in charge of the EDUCATION DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Mr. Tamizuddin Khan): (*a*) and (*c*) Yes.

(*b*) Assistance to the extent of Rs.75 each was given to teachers in the Calcutta area in 1942. It has not been found possible for financial reasons to give further assistance.

(*d*) A scheme was drawn up, but for financial reasons it was not possible to put it into practice.

Mr. NUR AHMED: With reference to (*b*), will the Hon'ble Minister please state if Government consider that Rs. 75 is sufficient and if they will consider the desirability of making further grants to the teachers?

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN: Government feel that further assistance is necessary but for financial reasons it has not been possible to give further assistance.

Mr. NARESH NATH MOOKERJEE: Has the Hon'ble Minister considered the desirability of absorbing these teachers in the various departments of Government where recruitment is now going on?

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN: The whole body of teachers thrown out of employment could not be absorbed but many of them have found employment in the various services connected with the war.

Grow More Food Campaign.

35. Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Agriculture Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) how many acres of culturable land, not cultivated before, have been brought under cultivation in Bengal since his assumption of office; what is the total acreage of culturable land in Bengal not yet brought under cultivation; and

(*b*) whether Government will consider the desirability of appointing a committee of members of both the Houses to push on the Grow

More Food Campaign and appoint one such now; if not, what are the grounds against this proposal?

MINISTER in charge of the AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Saiyed Muazzamuddin Hosain): (*a*) Exact information is not available; but since my assumption of the charge of the Agriculture Department, several important irrigation schemes have been taken up and I have reason to believe that as a result, new areas will be brought under cultivation. The total area of culturable land not yet brought under cultivation is estimated at 2,710,000 acres.

(*b*) There is already a Food Production Committee in Bengal consisting of official and non-official members. The question of reconstituting the Committee is under consideration of Government. At the time of reconstitution representatives from both Houses of Legislature will certainly be taken in.

Mr. NARESH NATH MOOKERJEE: Will the Hon'ble Minister please state if the Food Production Committee in Bengal has done any work or has submitted any scheme as to the possibility of growing more food in this province?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: The Food Production Committee met once after we had assumed office and gave us certain advice regarding certain matters. It will meet again next Saturday.

Mr. KADER BAKSH: Will the Hon'ble Minister please state what is the acreage under paddy cultivation?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: I want notice. But I may inform my friend that this question refers to uncultivated culturable land, that is to say, land not yet brought under cultivation.

Breaches and damages to bunds in Midnapore and Burdwan.

38. Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Communications and Works Department be pleased to state whether the breaches and damages caused to the bunds as a result of cyclone and flood in the districts of Midnapore and Burdwan are being attended to by the Government engineers and when they are expected to be completed?

MINISTER in charge of the COMMUNICATIONS and WORKS DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Mr. Barada Prasanna Pain): Information has been called for and the reply will be given as soon as it has been received.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state by what time he expects to give the information?

The Hon'ble Mr. BARADA PRASANNA PAIN: As soon as possible.

Point of Information.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: On a point of information, Sir. As the Hon'ble Food Minister is here, may I know if he is prepared to answer my short-notice question which was sent to him? I may say that the matter was before the House and the matter was discussed elsewhere, and I think he must have the information at his finger's end.

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: I am sorry, Sir, I am unable to identify the short-notice question to which the honourable member is referring. If he will be pleased to mention the subject, I shall try.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Chakraverti, what is the subject-matter of your short-notice question?

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: It is about the food situation.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I may inform the Hon'ble Minister that not only the question was sent to the department but the department had been reminded over the telephone. Will you kindly enquire into the matter and find out why the reply is being delayed?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: Certainly, Sir. If the honourable member raises his points during the debate today, I shall endeavour to answer them on the floor of the House.

Rai Bahadur KESHAB CHANDRA BANERJI: Sir, other questions tabled by this side of the House have not been replied to with regard to jute acreage and the rice policy of Government.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Question about rice policy is going to be answered today, as the Hon'ble Minister has said, in connection with the food situation.

Rai Bahadur KESHAB CHANDRA BANERJI: It was put in question form.

Mr. PRESIDENT: They are being gradually answered. I do not think there are many more unanswered questions.

Rai Bahadur KESHAB CHANDRA BANERJI: Will it be possible to answer them before the present session is over?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: Sir, we shall try our best to deal with them as soon as possible. But at present I am busy not only with the work connected with the Legislature but also with the general administration of the Civil Supplies Department which, as you know, is of such an important nature that I am not able to devote as much time on the legislative work as I would otherwise have done.

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHOLANABISH: Sir, may I know the fate of my question that has remained unanswered?

Mr. PRESIDENT: What is the number of your question?

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHOLANABISH: No. 21 I believe. It seeks to elicit information as to whether Government is going to postpone action on the acquisition of the zemindari rights.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I find from the list that that question has already been answered and that is why we started from question No. 22 today.

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHOLANABISH: It is a question which was answered by the Hon'ble Minister in charge of Revenue by referring to an answer made elsewhere.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Oh! yes, I remember it. Mr. Mukerjea, what about the answer to that question? You replied to that question by referring to a statement made by your predecessor in the other House. The decision was that you should try and reply to the question and make your reply self-contained.

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: I will do it tomorrow.

Special Motion under rule 96 of the Bengal Legislative Council Procedure Rules.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Sir, I desire to move the motion that stands in my name, namely,—

That this Council is of opinion that the statement of the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Civil Supplies on the policy pursued by the Ministry with regard to the food situation in Bengal is extremely disappointing and unsatisfactory, that its latest action in promulgating the price control order without making suitable provision for supplies of rice and other foodgrains has intensified the crisis, that it failed to adopt adequate measures to discharge the elementary responsibility of saving human lives from deaths due to starvation and has so far failed also to introduce rationing. This Council is further of opinion that the Government should declare Bengal a famine area and take upon itself the responsibility of feeding the destitute.

Sir, at the very outset, I desire to congratulate the Hon'ble Mr. Suhrawardy, the Food Minister, on his splendid health. The events which are happening around us would have weighed down with cares and anxieties any other mortal put in charge of the Civil Supplies Department. But, Sir, our dear friend looks as fresh as ever. He looks like the morning rose.

Sir, the Food Minister on the 15th September, 1943, made a statement on the food situation in Bengal. Among other things, he stated that without substantial imports of foodgrains from outside, the Government would not be in a position to meet the situation. He expressed his amazement at the ignorance prevailing in generally well-informed circles regarding Bengal's position and the reason why there was a shortage. There are still people in India, he observed, who suggested that there were enough foodgrains in Bengal and that by false propaganda they were declaring a shortage which did not exist and thus over-dramatising the situation. Sir, for

all these, the fault lies with the Hon'ble Minister himself. The Opposition repeatedly asserted the fact that there was a serious shortage of foodgrains and wanted the Government to declare Bengal a famine area. But the Ministry not only turned down the proposal, it went further and issued a press communiqué on the 3rd May, 1943. In that press communiqué we read "the Ministry for Civil Supplies is of the opinion that the prices now prevailing are purely speculative and bear no relation whatever to the true stock-taking position in the province as a whole. There has been a bumper *boro* crop both in our province as well as in Assam from which and other provinces, stocks are already on the move to Bengal while the prospects of the present *aus* crop are distinctly good. Large quantities of wheat, maize, *bojra* etc., in excess of Bengal's need are now being received from the Government of India." The Minister is convinced that any deficit this year can be fully met from the carry-over of 1941-42.

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: That is, Sir, interpolation. I have never said that large quantities of wheat etc. now being received from the Government of India are in excess of the requirements of Bengal.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: You did say that——

Mr. PRESIDENT: You better continue your speech and avoid talking.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: All right, Sir. It is not an interpolation. It is a fact and it has been published in the Government paper *Bengal Weekly*. I challenge the Hon'ble Minister to say that he did not say that. He did say that wheat and other foodgrains "in excess of Bengal's need are now being received from the Government of India". He further said in his statement "the Minister is convinced that any deficit this year can be fully met from the carry-over of 1941-42 crop..... The public may rest assured that there is no cause to fear any ultimate shortage of foodgrains". After this, Sir, can anybody wonder why there should be so much ignorance about the true state of things outside Bengal? Incalculable harm was done to Bengal by the press note which was published in all the morning papers on the 4th May, 1943, and circulated throughout India. Being convinced that there was no shortage, the Hon'ble Minister undertook the food drive throughout rural Bengal leaving out Calcutta and the industrial areas. No reasonable explanation has yet been given why he then left out Calcutta and its surroundings from a simultaneous food drive. The mountain was in labour and it produced the proverbial mouse. The Hon'ble Minister had to say that the districts had reported themselves to be deficit. The Calcutta drive was then very reluctantly undertaken and the Hon'ble Minister now says that stocks are neither considerable in the hands of the consumers nor of the trade nor of the employers. Chastened further by experience, he now admits that there is a serious shortage of foodgrains in the province and repeats, like the whipped boy, all the reasons which were advanced by the Opposition months ago. He now admits that famine condition is in acute form in many areas. He speaks of famine condition and is still reluctant to admit an actual famine.

The truth is, Sir, that a serious famine is raging from one end of Bengal to the other. Men, women and children in large numbers have left their homes and hearths and are roaming in the streets of the cities and towns of Bengal having made the pavements their resting and sleeping grounds. Children are being deserted by their parents, husbands are leaving their wives being unable to feed them. No less than 10 million people are seriously affected and deaths from starvation are taking place daily in large numbers. In Calcutta alone from the 15th August, as reported, no less than 1,500 people have died and several thousands have been put into hospitals as suffering from the effects of starvation. News from the mufassil is still more serious. Whether it is Dacca, Chittagong, Noakhali, Comilla, Munshiganj, Faridpur, Madaripur, Mymensingh, Dinajpur, Midnapur or Burdwan—in fact all important towns and places, the news is the same—appalling deaths from starvation, appalling scarcity of foodgrains, sky-rocketting prices.

Sir, to show that the Ministry has done much to relieve the prevailing distress, the Ministry declares that 1 crore 4 lakhs of rupees have been granted by the Government for agricultural loan, 1 crore 43 lakhs for gratuitous relief and 1 crore 8 lakhs for test relief works. Besides these, the Civil Supplies Department has spent 3 crores, it says, in distributing foodgrains at subsidized rates and 1 crore by the Agriculture Department for distributing seed grains. The Ministry also points out what steps have been recently taken in Calcutta to ease the situation and that no less than 2,500 kitchens have been opened to feed daily 6½ lakhs of people in the mufassil areas of Bengal. In spite of all these, what they fail to realize is the actual requirement of the province to meet the situation. What they do not realise is that provisions so far made are utterly inadequate to meet the exigencies of the situation which is responsible every day for deaths in appalling numbers resulting from starvation. They do not realise that it is the elementary duty of every civilised Government to remain responsible for saving every single life from starvation. A wise Government under the circumstances such as we are in would declare famine and administer relief according to the Famine Code.

Sir, the policy pursued by the Government for procurement and distribution of supplies was faulty and ended in disastrous consequences to the people of Bengal. An opportunity to retrieve the situation opened up with the raising of the embargo on free trade in the Eastern Zone but the Hon'ble Minister failed to take full advantage of it. Being the Secretary of the Muslim League he was so blinded by partisan spirit that without calling for public tender, he made one of his partymen Messrs. Ispahani and Co., the sole agent of the Bengal Government to purchase foodstuffs from the Eastern Zone. As yet nobody knows what quantities of foodgrains were purchased by that agent and at what price. Nor do the public know at what price the Government purchased rice from that agent and what that total quantity is. All that the public know is that in spite of the Hon'ble Minister's pathetic reliance on the Ispahanis, deaths from starvation are occurring every day throughout Bengal. Moslem League Government is

after all *Pakistan* Government and, Sir, events have conspired to prove to show that *Pakistan* and *Gorostan* have become convertible terms. The situation has become aggravated by the price-control order. It has effected the total disappearance of rice from the market. It passes my understanding how could a Government pass such an order without sufficient supplies in hand to meet a situation such as now obtains in Bengal. Trade has failed: should Government also fail to sell rice to the people? It has been stated by the Hon'ble Minister that rice is reappearing in the market——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Das, I may remind you that you have already spoken for 20 minutes. I hope you will now try to finish your speech, for, including yourself there are 17 more speakers.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: All right, Sir. Since August last the Government of Bengal is purchasing wheat direct from the Punjab and prices paid by them were not more than Rs. 10-4 per maund. The Punjab since August 15th last has despatched about 50,000 tons of wheat and its products. Eighty-six wagons left daily during three weeks in August with foodgrains from the Punjab to Bengal. Now this has not made any impression on the food situation here and we hear a charge that the Government of Bengal have made a profit of about rupees 20 lakhs out of the miseries of the people. All these are horrible, if true, and ought to be cleared up by an independent committee of enquiry. At present, prices are ruling as high as ever and people have not the wherewithal to purchase foodgrains. The price of rice in November, 1942, was Rs. 8 per maund, in December Rs. 12 per maund; in January, 1943, it rose up to Rs. 16 per maund and that was during the bomb scare in Calcutta. It was about Rs. 20 when the Huq Government fell, but since the present Government came into power it has soared to as much as Rs. 40 per maund and even more. In spite of the price-control order the price is ruling as high as ever. The only way now to save the people would be by rationing. This point was raised during the last session and urban rationing was promised; but nothing has as yet materialised and rationing still remains in the realm of promises while people are starving. Now, Sir, with regard to the controlled shops, it was promised——

(At this stage the honourable member reached the time-limit but was allowed two minutes more to finish.)

It was said that the controlled shops would be abolished and 400 Government shops in Calcutta and 400 more in the suburban areas would be started very soon for the purpose of eliminating the necessity of people standing in queues for obtaining supplies; but that announcement too has not been carried out.

Sir, by these acts of commission and omission the present Ministry has forfeited the confidence of the people. The people of Bengal are docile and law-abiding and fatalist. The Ministry knows these facts but I can say that in any other country under similar circumstances and condition their places would not have been worth even a day's purchase. Therefore, I say that a National Government, representing all parties within the Legislature, can alone inspire the confidence of the people and win the

wholehearted co-operation of all, which is so essential in these difficult times. Sir Nazimuddin who is at the head of the Government through fear of *Qaide Azam* of Bombay cannot agree to such a course and we are indeed in a difficult position. What then is to be done? What is needed is that the Government of India should step in and take upon itself the sole responsibility of solving the food problem. There is no time to lose. A great war is going on and the situation is quite abnormal. The enemy is at the gate and in such circumstances, the presence of a famine-stricken people behind the army is hardly conducive to war effort. Considering all these things, I think that the food situation should be made an all-India question and the Government of India should not delay a day to take this matter in their own hands.

Mr. PRESIDENT: There are two amendments to this Special Motion: one standing in the name of Mr. Nur Ahmed and the other in the name of Mr. Haridas Mazumdar. I may point out at this stage that Mr. Haridas Mazumdar's amendment raises very wide issues, more than one. But in view of the special importance of the question I have allowed both of them to be moved. If Mr. Nur Ahmed's amendment is carried, then the original motion will stand amended accordingly, and in that case Mr. Haridas Mazumdar's amendment will not arise. If Mr. Nur Ahmed's amendment is not carried, then I will ask Mr. Haridas Mazumdar to move his amendment. But I hope that in future honourable members will try to confine themselves to one issue in giving notice of a motion or amendment; otherwise, it becomes very difficult for the House to decide on what particular issue it should vote. I will give 15 minutes to the mover of the amendment.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Sir, I shall not move my amendment.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Mazumdar.

Khan Bahadur ABDUL HAMID CHOWDHURY: On a point of order, Sir. Before you take up amendments, I think the original motion before the House should be read out by the Chair.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Quite so: thank you. Motion moved: that this Council is of opinion that the statement of the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Civil Supplies on the policy pursued by the Ministry with regard to the food situation in Bengal is extremely disappointing and unsatisfactory, that its latest action in promulgating the price control order without making suitable provision for supplies of rice and other foodgrains has intensified the crisis, that it failed to adopt adequate measures to discharge the elementary responsibility of saving human lives from deaths due to starvation and has so far failed also to introduce rationing. This Council is further of opinion that the Government should declare Bengal a famine area and take upon itself the responsibility of feeding the destitute.

Mr. Mazumdar, you may now move your amendment.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: I beg to move that after the word "destitute" occurring at the end of the motion, the following be added, namely,—

This Council is further of opinion that—

(*i*) immediate steps should be taken to isolate the big consuming areas like Calcutta and Howrah including their industrial suburbs, Chittagong, Dacca, Narayanganj, all places of military concentration and construction and big evacuees' camps, from the rest of Bengal, with a view to maintain in the supplies in such areas with the imports from outside and to retain the supplies in rural Bengal for the relief of the poor masses and middle classes as far as practicable, supplementing the same with surplus of the foodgrains from outside Bengal to relieve specially deficit areas;

(*ii*) immediate steps should be taken to prevent the purchases of *aus* paddy and rice as also the coming *aman* crop by big traders from outside, whether Government agents or others, at competitive prices, and to prohibit the export of such foodgrains to the bigger consuming centres isolated as above;

(*iii*) immediate steps should be taken to secure cent. per cent. control over supply, prices and distribution of foodgrains available from whatever source, to be carried on by an agency enjoying 100 per cent. confidence of the people.

Sir, in moving the amendment I say that we are in the grip of a grim famine. Man and dog are fighting for a morsel of food. The situation is not over-dramatised. It is entirely due to over-confidence and lack of business foresight on the part of the authorities that be. Sir, Bengal is crying for food. The sky of Bengal is ringing night and day, every hour, every minute with plaintive cry of imaciated millions—"mother give us a little rice, father give us a little gruel".

The most vitally affected people are—

(1) Landless labour; their number is countless.

(2) Peasants with lands of small measure. Their number comes next.

(3) Jute growers; cultivators who grow jute but possess no rice cultivating lands. They are the most exploited class. Mill-owners are making fabulous wealth at their expense.

(4) Middle class under-employed; their income is much below their pressing need.

(5) Middle class unemployed. They are sure to go out of their existence as they got no credit or reserve to fall back upon.

(6) Teachers of Bengal. They have got their employments only in name. By the dislocation of social life their struggle for existence is bitter.

(7) The families of the political prisoners. These prisoners have been deprived of their liberties without a regular trial. There is none in the world to look after their dependants. Many of them are suffering for their opinion.

The only people who are living in plenty are those who are connected with the War Supplies and War Constructions. I do not here like to repeat the oft-repeated complaint about the location of Bengal's bottomless pit, the mystery whereof will never be unravelled. Nor do I propose to repeat the grievances of the country against the present Ministry regarding the appointment of sole agents to procure food supplies at any cost, in any manner they like. Nor do I like to bring in the complaint publicly made by the responsible Food Minister and the Premier of the Punjab against the suspicious conduct of the Bengal Ministry.

I should, however, like to compare Bengal with one of my neighbouring provinces before whose doors we had, of late, become supplicants.

Any one who pays even a casual visit to Bihar will be struck with the efficiency of administration regarding food in that province. As a part of my family has been resident at Madhupur for nearly two years, I have to pay frequent visits to that town and have had thus an opportunity of gaining first-hand knowledge. That province was being ruled under section 93, without a ministry, till recently by Sir Thomas Rutherford, who did not spare himself and his officers in the task of tracking the hoarders and the profiteers and removing the sufferings of the poor. Unlike in Bengal, immediately after the last paddy crop was cut, immense quantities of paddy and rice were seized under Defence of India Rules and from that the poor are being supplied all these months with one seer per head at 5 annas per seer. To give a concrete instance, Madhupur with a population of 9,000 only has 14 controlled shops where 52 maunds of rice are daily sold and a poor man has not to wait for more than half an hour to receive his quota. These shops kept by private persons are under the supervision of local gentry, so that any dishonesty is at once checked. The Government has not had to lock money on these stocks but asks the owners of controlled shops to advance money daily to the stock-holders who are liable for the quantity seized *minus* the daily offtake. The Subdivisional Officer, Deoghur, comes generally once a week and very often has to take these merchants to task for attempts to avoid supplying rice to the controlled shops regularly. The plan of work is simplicity itself and the strong arm of law is felt everywhere. All officers of the Government from the Governor down to the subordinate price-control officer are acting like one man and the police are working admirably. At Madhupur alone about 14,000 maunds of rice were taken over.

At Deoghur, Bhagalpur, Hazaribagh, Muzaffarpur and other towns of Bihar large quantities were similarly seized and are now being utilised for the benefit of the destitute. An account of the total quantity seized in Bihar coming from that Government will be illuminating and will throw into bold relief the inactivity of the Bengal Government. When *aman* paddy was harvested, the cultivator sold rice all over Bengal at Rs. 12 per maund. This rice, thanks to hoarders and profiteers, sold at Rs. 22 in Calcutta within two months of the harvest.

The recent disappearance of stocks of rice in Calcutta and elsewhere in Bengal to evade the prices fixed by the Provincial Government is a thing

inconceivable in Bihar. The police and the executive here must have abdicated their functions to make this possible——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. Mr. Mazumdar, what is your amendment? You are not speaking about your amendment at all. You are not supporting your amendment. You are speaking on the general question.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: I am coming to that point, Sir. Unless the House is acquainted with the full facts of the case, how can I expect the honourable members to support the suggestions embodied in my amendment?

Sir, how long does it take the police and the executive, if they work in right earnest to trace these stocks which have certainly not been thrown into the Bay of Bengal? If this be the sample of efficiency here, the charge of Sir Edward Benthall, now at the head of the Railways and Transport, that in Bengal there is no adequate arrangement for unloading food wagons must be true, notwithstanding what our Ministers may say to the contrary. Such weakness of administration is in a large measure responsible for the starvation of millions. The question of food, at a time like this, should be discussed dispassionately. The lines of Macaulay describing ancient Rome come to our mind—

"Then none was for the party
But all was for the State".

Judged by the cold light of economics, the past Ministers grievously failed to grasp the situation and to do the needful; just as the present Ministry is failing before our eyes to do such simple administrative work as preventing disappearance of rice stocks in Calcutta, the second city of the Empire—a city honeycombed with the police, A.R.P. men and civic guards. Immediately before going out of office the first League Ministry administered a parting kick on the jute-grower of Bengal by doubling the acreage of jute. A writer in the widely-circulated monthly journal "Prabashi" requested the succeeding Ministry to right this wrong decision, which, as he pointed out in clear language, would not only mean a low price of jute but would result in shortage of food in 1943 consequent on a smaller paddy crop at a time when imports from Burma could not be expected. If an ordinary writer could make this forecast which was, after all, commonsense, why could not our Ministers with a costly Agricultural Department at their disposal comprehend the situation? The paddy crop towards the end of 1941 was a bumper one. Who does not know that a plentiful paddy crop is followed by a lean one? The quantity of rice which used to be imported from Burma was not small—1½ million tons. Why did the first League Ministry double jute acreage with these incontrovertible data before them? Why did not the next progressive Ministry set aside the decision while there was time? If they erred, the consequences which are inevitable must follow. Laws of economics, like waves in the case of King Canute, are no respector of persons. They have all erred. In a country where public opinion is unorganised, lamentably partisan and does not coalesce when a major wrong

is committed, these errors meaning death to millions go with impunity. It is my firm conviction that if the Government of the province were in the hands of the Indian Civil Service under an able Governor alone, so much bungling would never have happened. We remember the days when Sir John Shore imported so much foodgrains into the famine area that prices went below the normal years. In 1874 Lord Northbrooke devised such measures for famine relief as resulted only in 22 deaths, though 2 crores of persons fell within the clutches of famine. When the Famine Code was framed,—a code which our Ministry has not the courage to apply on pain of resignation, the administration was in the hands of Europeans—not responsible to the people. Viewing a famine which may take away not one-third of Bengal's population as in 1770 but might involve even two-thirds, I have no hesitation in saying that the only course which can yet save the hapless province is for our Ministers to resign and hand over the reins of administration to experienced administrators. Rice at present monopolises our attention and the inequity which is being perpetrated on the jute-grower is being overlooked; we forget that a good price of jute enables the grower to buy rice at a high price. 90 per cent. of the jute-growers of Bengal are Muhammadans. It must be a poor Muslim League Ministry which helps the European exploiter to roll in wealth but does not raise the little finger to help the Muslims who are exploited and steeped in poverty. The avarice of the tradesmen is common all over the world. It is for the Government to come to the rescue of the oppressed. I fully believe that if the Government in the province is manned entirely by the British under the operation of section 93, relief will be given to the jute-growing peasantry. The Government of Madras under section 93 did not hesitate in the teeth of vehement opposition to requisition yarn from European-managed cotton mills under Defence of India Rules for the benefit of the weavers of the province. But what is the record of our Ministers? A hundred per cent. British administration courageously holds the balance even between European and Indian contending interests, while a weak-kneed Indian Ministry, absorber of shocks only, readily lets down millions of its countrymen or co-religionists for the sake of 30 votes in the Legislature. We cannot forget that a British Government responsible to the Legislature imposed a protective duty of 25 per cent. on British piecegoods thus stopping an import to the value of 60 crores of rupees.

If on account of this famine two crores of Hindus and two crores of Muhammadans die in Bengal due to the failure on the part of the Government to take timely steps to avert the calamity, I venture to predict,—and it is no idle speculation, Sir, that the All-India Hindu-Moslem ratio will be reversed more to the disadvantage of the Moslems than of the Hindus, as nearly 40 per cent. of India's Muhammadan population live in Bengal. Muhammadans crying for *Pakistan* will then be nearer Indian Christians in numerical strength than now. If our Ministers will not pay heed to this entreaty, I would request His Excellency the acting Governor to establish here an efficient I. C. S. rule from top to bottom as he did in Bihar and thus save millions of lives by giving effect to the suggestions embodied in the

amendment in question. If His Excellency can save Bengal, history will rank him in that galaxy of British Indian administrators—Bentinck, North-Brooke, Ripon, Shore, Cotton and Todd. With these words, I commend my amendment to the acceptance of the House.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Amendment moved: that after the word "destitute" occurring at the end of the motion, the following be added, namely,—

"That this Council is further of opinion that—

(*i*) immediate steps should be taken to isolate the big consuming areas like Calcutta and Howrah including their industrial suburbs, Chittagong, Dacca, Narayanganj, all places of military concentration and construction and big evacuees' camps, from the rest of Bengal, with a view to maintain the supplies in such areas with the imports from outside and to retain the supplies in rural Bengal for the relief of the poor masses and middle classes as far as practicable, supplementing the same with surplus of the foodgrains from outside Bengal to relieve specially deficit areas;

(*ii*) immediate steps should be taken to prevent the purchases of *aus* paddy and rice as also the coming *aman* crop by big traders from outside, whether Government agents or others, at competitive prices, and to prohibit the export of such foodgrains to the bigger consuming centres isolated as above;

(*iii*) immediate steps should be taken to secure cent. per cent. control over supply, prices and distribution of foodgrains available from whatever source, to be carried on by an agency enjoying 100 per cent. confidence of the people."

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: Sir, before the debate on this motion proceeds further, I would like to tender my apology to Mr. Lalit Chandra Das for having interrupted him at that time. I have now a copy of the *Bengal Weekly* of 10th May last before me and I find that Mr. Lalit Chandra Das was correct in what he said.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Thank you. May I say one thing, Sir? I have no objection to the amendment moved by Mr. Mazumdar. I accept it.

Mr. PRESIDENT: You cannot do so at this stage. It will be for the House to do so.

Mr. T. S. NIMMO: Mr. President, Sir, I rise to oppose the special motion moved by my honourable friend Mr. Lalit Chandra Das. In doing so, I would state briefly that our party support Government's *aus* crop scheme and we support the price-control that has been imposed. We consider that there can be no question of going back on price-control in the present circumstances but that every effort should be made to secure control of supplies. This, we take it is the object of Government's *aus* purchasing scheme.

In general, Sir, we consider that the Hon'ble Minister has followed an active policy and in particular we appreciate his endeavours to secure supplies from outside the province. We applaud his efforts and we urge that he will continue them. The situation in the rural districts of Bengal has not, we believe, been over-dramatised and large supplies of rice and other foodgrains must be obtained from outside the province if the situation is to be saved. We cannot see that any benefit would be obtained by a mere declaration of Bengal as a famine area. Government have been, and are, we believe, taking steps to organise Bengal on a famine basis. That, we submit, Sir, will require the united efforts of all,—officials and non-officials alike,—and we would only stress the necessity for a uniform policy and for proper central direction and co-ordination of relief measures.

Sir, so far as internal policy is concerned, we would emphasise that the main object should be to obtain control of rice supplies. We would like to put forward certain suggestions with regard to one important aspect of control of supplies, namely, control of the rice mills. The rice mills form an obvious bottle-neck through which supplies to urban areas can be controlled and, in our opinion, these mills should be brought under a special licensing system. In Assam, a Rice Mills Licensing Order was brought into force on 31st March this year, and that order was based on a similar order issued by the Madras Government some time earlier. It seems unfortunate that the Bengal Government should always lag behind other provincial Governments in food control measures. That, we consider, Sir, is mainly due to the inadequacy of organisation, but I do not wish to enter into that point at present.

The Assam Rice Mills Licensing Order provides that no person shall carry on the business of milling rice by power-driven machinery except in accordance with the conditions of a licence issued by the District Magistrate. Contravention of the conditions of a licence is punishable with cancellation or suspension of the licence. Any authorised officer may enter and inspect any premises in which he has reason to believe that the milling of rice is taking place. The form of licence issued under this order provides for fortnightly returns of stocks, receipts, productions, deliveries etc. and it also provides that rice shall only be processed in a manner that prevents it from being highly milled. I beg to enquire through you, Sir, if the Hon'ble Minister has considered this question of "under-milling". Generally speaking, rice is unnecessarily highly milled, resulting in an unnecessary quantity of broken rice and bran being produced. By so doing, the food value of the rice is sacrificed for the benefit of its appearance and a considerable quantity of rice is lost by the production of broken rice and rice bran which also contains a certain appreciable quantity of broken rice. In the production of highly-milled rice, at least 5 per cent. additional bran is taken off in comparison with low-milled rice. If, therefore, high milling of rice is entirely prohibited as under the Assam Rice Mills Licensing Order, an appreciable increase in the actual output of rice from paddy is obtained. Practical milling tests by an experienced firm of millers have shown that the yield of "war quality rice" is about 26 seers per maund of paddy milled from

average quality grain in comparison with 23 seers in highly milled rice. If this form of so-called under-milling were universally applied throughout India, the extra quantity of rice produced would exceed the production of machine milled rice by 5 per cent. or more according to the broken rice content which passes as rice. It has been found in practice difficult to persuade those who have been used to highly-milled rice to change over to the less finished article; but there is no doubt that from a health point of view low-milled rice is much more beneficial, as the largest part of the vitamin content is to be found in the bran. We consider, Sir, that this question of under-milling is of considerable importance and we would like to know from the Hon'ble Minister what he proposes to do as regards (*i*) licensing of rice mills along lines similar to the Assam and Madras Rice Mills Licensing Orders and (*ii*) with regard to the under-milling of rice.

Sir, there is one other suggestion I desire to put forward. We understand that the Assam Government have approved in principle a proposal to require all *mahajans* and merchants to notify to a Government officer the number and amount of advances given by them against the growing crops. Under this proposal the Land Records staff will make enquiries on the spot to check both notified and unnotified advances. We shall be glad to know if the Bengal Government propose to take similar measures, as we consider that this would also be an important step towards securing control over supplies and towards preventing supplies going into the black market.

Sir, Bengal has undoubtedly lagged miserably behind other provinces such as Bombay and Madras and even Assam in this question of securing control over supplies. For this we do not think the Hon'ble Minister is to blame. He was left a terrible heritage and in the short time he has been in office we consider that he has been tackling this immense problem with energy and determination. We would like, however, to impress upon him that Bengal is very badly behind in these matters and that if there was proper co-ordination of provincial policies it would not be necessary to draw attention to administrative measures taken in the neighbouring provinces.

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: Sir, I have not been able to follow that portion of the honourable member's speech where he spoke of advances. Does he refer to Government making advances for purchasing crops?

Mr. HAMIDUL HUQ CHOWDHURY: No, he refers to *mahajans* and traders making advances for the purpose of purchasing crop.

Mr. T. B. NIMMO: That is so, Sir, and my point is that the *mahajans* and traders would be required to notify Government of the advances made.

Mrs. K. D'ROZARIO: Mr. President, Sir, the four horsemen of the Apocalypse are riding hard over the fair land of Bengal today with the stark figure of famine in the lead. This is a familiar figure to India, present at all times in one place or another, but sometimes terrible in the intensity and range of his wrath. But it is one thing to read in history of the lamentable plight of famine-stricken people, of bodies polluting the rivers,

and corrupting the land, it is quite another to be brought face to face with the grim tragedy in the year of grace 1943 in a city of modern civilisation, namely, Calcutta. In the backward past of scientific deficiency and lack of organisation and communication, these things may be forgiven, perhaps even considered inevitable. In the forward present of scientific efficiency, much-boosted organisation and fast communications, these wrongs are unforgivable. We may deny the greatness of the calamity that has befallen Bengal today, we may deride the over-dramatisation of the situation, and still we are left with a residue of truth grim in its realism. I, Sir, stand here as a representative of an infinitesimal section of the millions of India, perhaps less affected, but nevertheless struggling, and feeling in no small way, the pinch of high prices and the unprecedented rise in the cost of living that obtains in Calcutta. Like others, we feel that with some foresight and a little determination, and a desire to do, rather than merely debate, this sorry situation need not have arisen—Blame? Whom shall we blame, and to what good, unless we can profit by the experience. The moment calls for action, action, action—action against vile hoarders, action against profiteers, action against the inefficient, the dilatory, the responsibility-shirker, the evader, the exploiter, the communalist, the partisan, the self-seeker—all these have, and are contributing to the dreadful toll of death and disease, caused mainly through starvation—against them there must be ruthless action—strong, swift action to save, to bring food, to bring medical aid, to grow more food, and to ensure its distribution in the right direction, and at prices people can pay. There is much more demanding attention, but these are, and must be, the immediate concern. If I close on a note of regret for the years that the locusts have eaten, it is not in a spirit of merely moaning over the unredeemable past, but to point out that if things were mismanaged in the past, in what we regard as normal conditions, what can we expect in the present abnormal state of affairs prevailing today? No piecemeal relief can hope to effect much; unless Government honestly attacks the question and gets really serious, there is no hope of things becoming better. The fixing of prices does no good at all, but rather makes commodities disappear altogether. When one considers that elusive political figures are brought to book when they become a menace to the good Government of the country, why the same search and unearthing of those responsible for this disappearance of rice and foodstuffs does not have the same success, is rather a conjecture. As many of the previous speakers have had much to say about bribery and corruption, I will not refer to these malpractices that are hinted at, and openly denounced in the Press, but I would rather appeal to the Ministry to take strong measures against those who put themselves into the hands of the law.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: Mr. President, Sir, I beg to support the motion moved by my honourable friend Mr. Lalit Chandra Das and instead of repeating what he has said I generally endorse what he has said. Regarding the achievements of the Food Minister I would only ask what he has done since he assumed office. There is a proverb that the

proof of pudding is in the eating: but what do we find? We find that when the present Ministers took office the price of rice was Rs. 22 per maund; but it has now reached the figure of more than Rs. 40, and today in Calcutta rice is probably not available at any price at all, and the black market is charging Rs. 60 for a maund of rice today.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: Can you name any such black market?

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: Please do not interrupt me. It is for the Hon'ble Minister and not for you to put questions. First of all, he began with a propaganda that there is no food shortage here in Bengal. Then he said that rice was under the *taktoposh*. But the whole of Bengal was combed and no appreciable quantity of rice was found to help us in this distress. After all, what has he done for his supporters to say like what my friend Khan Sahib Abul Quasem has said in his speech——

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: What did I say?

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: You ought to be more attentive. I believe from what he has said that he would have made a fine Propaganda Minister for his party instead of being Minister for Civil Supplies. As a Propaganda Minister he would have out-Goebbelled Goebbels of Germany. As stated in the statement of the Hon'ble Finance Minister, he has ushered in a huge department—the Department of Civil Supplies—at a cost of Rs. 31 lakhs, out of which half is required to meet the cost of the additional staff first engaged in June last for the purpose of the combined anti-hoarding drive and census of foodstuffs throughout the province and since retained to supervise the work of the food committees brought into being at that time. But we were given to understand that the existing officers and voluntary workers will do the work without entailing heavy cost on the Exchequer of the Government. We find now that Rs. 15½ lakhs have been spent for his department. Another point, Sir, about the appointment of Mr. N. M. Khan, I.C.S. This gentleman has been appointed to do what? Just to see that wheat that is coming from Punjab to Bengal; and for this purpose a highly salaried officer of the status of Mr. Khan has been appointed. Probably it is a reward for the notoriety he had gained in Midnapore——

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: An excellent work was done by him there.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: You being a person of that district you ought to be ashamed of saying so——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Chakraverti, you better confine yourself to the point at issue.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: What I want to drive at is that the appointments in the Department of Civil Supplies are——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Make your observations general.

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: All right, Sir. What I wanted to say is that unnecessarily high-salaried officers are appointed in this department. I am inclined to think that the Civil Supplies Department may be divided into two parts, and there ought to be two organisations—one for the purpose of procuring food and another for the purpose of distribution. So far as the work of procuring is concerned, it is necessary that high officials should be appointed: as for distribution, many big persons are willing to volunteer their services for this purpose: men like Justice Ameer Ali, Justice S. R. Das and other important men are willing to devote their time to the work of distribution: there are many Parliamentary Secretaries of the Council and the Assembly, members of the Legislature and various other officers of Government—members of the Corporation—these persons will no doubt help in the work of distribution. If the Hon'ble Minister had gone into this matter carefully and properly, then the matter could have been done with the least possible expenditure and the amount thus saved could have been spent for the relief of the persons in distress for whom the department stands. Another point that I want to make out is that our Hon'ble Mr. Suhrawardy always sheds tears for lack of co-operation on the part of the Opposition and the public. Sir, we always wanted to offer the hand of co-operation but what we found was that at each meeting that we attended the whole object which the Hon'ble Minister for Civil Supplies seemed to have in view was to see us sitting before him in prayerful silence and hearing his peroration about his exploits. Nothing else was done, no committee has been formed and we were not taken into confidence as to what was being done. Sir, even the members of his own party have some complaints in this respect. As for the conduct of the Government officers who have been mentioned on the floor of this House by responsible gentlemen, we have seen in the papers of today (23rd September, 1943), and also yesterday that two officers have been arrested. Sir, this goes to show that there is corruption going on. Sir, while the last Fazlul Huq Ministry was in office this very Hon'ble Mr. Suhrawardy was always trying to make out that there was corruption in his administration, but, Sir, may I ask why the same thing is being perpetrated in the present regime also?

(At this stage, the member reached his time-limit.)

Khan Bahadur M. A. MOMIN: Sir, it is human nature that when we are in adversity—and at the present moment there is no doubt that we are in dire adversity—we fall foul of one another. We hear criticisms all around us. The atmosphere in the country is surcharged with criticisms most of which are unjust and unreasonable. But what pains me to see is that the criticism emanating even from the literate sections, if I may say so, has been malicious. I deprecate this attitude of the critics in a matter in which we are vitally concerned. In my opinion we should put all our politics on the shelf and join together in trying to give relief to the people where relief is very necessary. Sir, it is our misfortune that Bengal has too much of politics. Here you cannot do anything without politics. If it is relief work, there must be politics; if it is rationing, there must be

criticisms on political lines. As I have said already, that unless we are free from these defects it will be very difficult to do anything really good for the country. I have heard complaints against the present Ministry and particularly against the Food Minister. Although I belong to the Ministerial Party—and I believe that party affiliation requires unstinted loyalty and support,—I am not one of those who will support any Minister or any measure if I know that the Minister is in the wrong and that everything is not over-board. But when I support Mr. Suhrawardy in this matter of food, I do so because I am fully convinced that he has been doing his best, working very hard and with intelligence and energy to try to solve the very serious problem of food shortage in Bengal. Of course, it does not follow that in spite of his industry and energy he has been able to achieve that amount of success which he deserves; there are circumstances which stand in the way of such achievement. As a matter of fact, critics who come mostly from the Opposition side, who had been supporters of the previous Ministry, do not realise the chaos and confusion in which the whole situation was left when the Ministry changed hands and which had to be surmounted before anything useful could be done by the present Ministry. Sir, a complaint has been made that in the beginning Mr. Suhrawardy said that there was no shortage at any time; but, Sir, who spread that idea in the first instance? As has been repeated so often, it was the Premier of the previous Government himself who at a Conference in Delhi said that there would not be any serious shortage in Bengal, and if left alone she would be able to manage her affairs.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: But it was immediately contradicted by him.

Khan Bahadur M. A. MOMIN: Well, we do not believe his contradiction. Whenever Mr. Fazlul Huq makes a statement he invariably contradicts it; so we believed neither his statement nor his contradiction. Everybody knows that the success of the scheme depends on a proper procurement of supplies and its distribution. But what was the policy of procurement followed by the last Ministry? What happened during their regime?

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA MUKHERJEE: Sir, is this point relevant to the motion under discussion, viz., what happened during the regime of the last Ministry and what will be done by the present Ministry?

Khan Bahadur M. A. MOMIN: The policy of procurement that had been followed before was extremely defective. As a matter of fact, what was done at the time? First of all, rice was purchased by an agent of Government who was appointed by that Ministry, not by this Ministry; at the same time Government official agents were appointed, and thirdly, there were the industrialists, who were afraid that if they did not have proper stocks, their industry would come to an end. Therefore, a triangular competition was witnessed among Government's official agents, other agents appointed by Government and the industrialists; and this led to the rise in price of rice. Then, after that under pressure of non-official opinion in the

Legislature, the purchase of rice was de-controlled and permits were given for export and import of rice from one district to another. This granting of permits, for obvious reasons, militated against real freedom of action. If at that time Government had fixed the price at which people could buy rice, then a lot of mischief would have been avoided; but that was never done by the past Ministry. Then, some of the honourable members have criticised the policy of price-control. I am afraid they do not realise what the real effect would have been if the prices had not been controlled before the purchase of *aus* and *aman* crops which we expect very shortly. Before the control order was passed, the price was going up and every one complained against the Ministry that prices were going up, people were unable to buy rice at Rs. 40 or Rs. 45 a maund and the Ministry were doing nothing. Now that the price has been controlled, you complain that because the price has been controlled no rice and other foodgrains are to be had. Well, you cannot have both ways. As a matter of fact, when the prices were controlled, I expected that the supplies would go underground; but who were the persons who suffered for that? What is the percentage of people who could buy rice at Rs. 45 a maund? I do not think it is more than 20 per cent. of the population. So, 80 per cent. could not in any case buy rice at Rs. 45 a maund. For them, rice at such an exorbitant price would be the same as if rice did not exist in Bengal. That was the reason why price-control was necessary. You have seen what is the effect of control. It may not be available everywhere; but wherever it is available, it is being sold at a reasonable price. Then, Sir, it is very easy to blame Government. But may I ask what co-operation Government received from us? We complain about the black market which I call blackmail market——

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: Our co-operation has not been accepted.

Khan Bahadur M. A. MOMIN: I am explaining: people like us go to a *moodi's* shop and ask for rice: if you do not get it from the shop you go to the black market and purchase rice at Rs. 45 or Rs. 50 a maund, as my friend Mr. Chakraverti has said. You buy rice at Rs. 60 per maund and are satisfied that your children would be fed: you have no consideration for your neighbours. Instead of purchasing rice at Rs. 45 or Rs. 50 a maund, why don't you inform the police and prosecute the men who are selling in the black market. It is very easy to say—why Government are not dealing with the profiteers and dishonest shopkeepers? But Government is not omnipotent and unless you help them in detecting the profiteers, how is it possible for them to check these men. Another thing, Sir. Comparison has been made with other provinces. You cannot compare the condition of Bengal with any other province. Mr. Roy Chowdhury has compared the condition of Bihar with Bengal. My friend does not understand that the condition of a deficit province cannot be compared with that of a surplus province. Here in Bengal the condition is otherwise. In Bihar they have surplus and they can afford to send the surplus; because they have surplus, they have plenty, they can manage their affairs well. So it is no use comparing Bengal with any other province. Another thing which I often hear

and today I have heard again (here the member reached time-limit and was allowed to proceed) about the promulgation of section 93 in this province. I cannot understand how any public man can recommend such a course. Don't you realise that promulgation of section 93 will mean that we are unfit to rule in our own province when a serious and complicated situation arises. Therefore, to say that this Government or the previous Government should be managed by the officials is a slur of which everybody should be ashamed.

Reference to under-milling and the licensing of mills which has been made by the European group has my whole-hearted support. As a matter of fact, in the report of the All-India Food Policy Committee also you will find a recommendation that rice should be under-milled as is being done in Madras. Sir, lastly, I was also amused that my friend on the other side referred to the rosy appearance of Mr. Suhrawardy. He probably does not realise that people may have worries but if their conscience is clear and if they have the satisfaction that they have done a good day's job, they may have sound sleep and do not lose their sleep.

Mr. HAMIDUL HUQ CHOWDHURY: Sir, Bengal has now to all intents and purposes been saddled with miseries the like of which has not been seen or heard of in its history and in the midst of such tragedy,—when thousands are daily dying on the pavements and in the open fields, in the boats and trains,—we should not lose our time here on criticisms which we have been hearing in this House and elsewhere purely on party lines. The Opposition has been overpowered with a sense of frustration in that they are not in office. Though they are not in office they should give co-operation to the present Government in tackling a national crisis like this. They must not forget that co-operation is possible in a system of Government in which one party remains in office and another remains in Opposition. It seems that so far as the present Government is concerned, the Opposition cannot reconcile itself to their position. Their conduct only shows that they can co-operate with other parties only when they are in office and non-co-operate when they are in opposition. Sir, I will not detain the House by replying to criticisms made on purely party lines except by saying that if anybody is responsible for this crisis in Bengal, they alone have contributed to most of our difficulties. Mr. Haridas Mazumdar has very glibly made a statement as to what the Bihar Government has done; he has said that as early as January, 1943, the Bihar Government took courage in both hands and began to purchase here for emergency. Mr. Mazumdar says that Bengal Government was criminally negligent in that way. He has forgotten that the present Government came into office long after the harvesting season of January last. Sir, his main purpose as well as that of the mover of the resolution is to create difficulties for the Government in the province. They have created difficulties in the past and they are determined to create difficulties at present by false propaganda throughout the length and breadth of India only to gain party advantage. Sir, but for the mal-administration of the last Government the Opposition would not have been in possession of

any material to make their false propaganda. They have found fault with Mr. Suhrawardy for saying in a pamphlet in May and June last that there was no shortage of rice in Bengal. But, Sir, he has repeatedly declared on the floor of the House that he did so in order to reassure the public and to put heart in them regarding the stock position, thus creating an atmosphere against panic which might lead to hoarding and profiteering. But he does not remember that in a serious conference attended by different provincial Ministers and the Members of the Government of India, Mr. Fazlul Huq, the then Chief Minister, solemnly declared that there was no shortage of rice in Bengal. Sir, I will appeal to them not to discuss this matter on party lines any longer. The less it is discussed on those lines, the better will it be for the province. Mr. Lalit Chandra Das and his great leader Mr. Fazlul Huq have told the world that a mere declaration of famine in Bengal will solve all the troubles, as the Government of Bengal will be forced to feed everybody if the Famine Code is applied. Sir, what does he mean by "Famine Code"? A Famine Relief Act is there; official instructions might be issued how to deal with famine; but there is no legal duty cast on anybody to meet the situation. Mere declaration of famine gives you the right to use the sum of Rs. 12½ lakhs that is provided by the Famine Insurance Fund. But, Sir, do my friends know what the Government of Bengal has already spent and is going to spend? We are in the midst of a tragedy. Thousands of persons are dying, and it is no exaggeration to say that while we are quarrelling here, people are expiring by thousands in the cities and villages of Bengal. Looking under the *taktaposhes* or at our stores and store-rooms will not give the assistance we need. The United Nations are fighting for freedom but for whose freedom? They are fighting at the cost of thousands of lives in Bengal, and I submit that this tragedy has, to a large extent, been created by their operations. Sir, we hear that 20 to 30 ships containing luxury goods by what are called "liberty ships" are going to come to this country from America and England laden with razor blades and other luxury goods for the benefit of the traders and exporters. But, Sir, could not these ships be freed for carrying foodstuffs for the 60 million starving people of Bengal? Those ships are not available for this all-important purpose but they can be employed in bringing to this country blades and other goods while the people are dying for want of food. 30 ships can bring in one trip—three hundred thousand tons each—sufficient to tide over the October and November crisis, together with what we are likely to get in India. The United States of America and the British Government are wholly responsible for massing such huge armies on the battlefront in Eastern India. They have created great difficulties of transport which plays no mean part in intensifying the crisis. The huge army of workers—all drafted from outside are living on the foodstuffs which would otherwise have been available to the people of the province. They have acquired large tracts of cultivable fields for defence work, thus encroaching upon their productive capacity. In diverse ways, therefore, they have contributed to this most distressing situation. It does not lie in their mouth to say now that it is not their concern and throw the entire responsibility upon the unequal shoulders of the provincial Government.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Hamidul Huq Chowdhury, you are proceeding on dangerous lines. You must remember that you are now criticising a foreign Government.

Mr. HAMIDUL HUQ CHOWDHURY: Yes, Sir, these foreign Governments are responsible for our miseries and our deaths and therefore they deserve criticisms. No decorum should stand in the way of my criticising them in this way to awaken in them their sense of duty by us.

Mr. PRESIDENT: But it is against the rules of this House, and you should give up this line of argument.

Mr. HAMIDUL HUQ CHOWDHURY: All right, Sir. Therefore, I appeal to the foreign Governments to apply and divert some of the huge resources they have got at least partly to remove this gigantic burden off the shoulders of the provincial Government. So far as the Government of Bengal's policy is concerned, they should also divert the whole of their energy towards the solution of this problem at least to the extent that lies in their power. There is one other thing, Sir. Usually, the permanent officials of Government play a greater part in these things, in the carrying out of Government's policy when it is enunciated and put into operation. No scheme of Government can be worked with success without their co-operation. But I am very sorry to say that permanent officials have in the present grave crisis been very indifferent and corruption runs rampant among them. There are many good paper schemes which could have done great service and given relief to us if properly worked out, but they have all foundered because the permanent officials did not extend the co-operation which the administration has a right to expect from them. Sir, corruption must be stamped out and there must be a crusade against corruption. It is this corruption which is greatly responsible for the existence of the black market, the concealment of stocks and the disappearance of rice on the promulgation of the price-control order. For this purpose, the detective force at the disposal of the department should be increased and all the attention of the department should be directed towards that object and each individual officer should be instructed to see that he plays the part necessary in this tragic time.

(At this stage the honourable member reached the time-limit and resumed his seat.)

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA MUKHERJI: Mr. President, Sir, I rise to support the motion moved by my friend Mr. Lalit Chandra Das. I am very sorry that a good deal of irrelevancy has crept in in eulogizing one party and in blaming another.

Now, Sir, coming to the original motion, I consider that the most important part of the resolution will be found in the last three lines, namely, "This Council is further of opinion that the Government should declare Bengal a famine area and take upon itself the responsibility of feeding the destitute." Unfortunately, Sir, I find that there is a good deal of misapprehension in the minds of the honourable members of this House

as to its effect and to the legal implications of the declaration of famine in the province of Bengal at the present time. In this connection, I would refer the honourable members to the position which the present Food Minister stated on the 10th March when he was in the Opposition. He said at that time that Bengal was in the midst of famine conditions. On the 19th July when in this House the Food matter was discussed, in my speech I insisted that Bengal should be declared a famine area and provisions of the Famine Code should be applied. What was the reply given by the Hon'ble Minister? I may be permitted to read from his speech the relevant portion. He said, "My friend, Mr. Bankim Chandra Mukherji, wants that Bengal should be declared a famine area; as if by the mere declaration of Bengal as a famine area the problem would be solved and the people will be saved from starvation. If on mere declaration of Bengal as a famine area the problem is solved, I am ready to declare it a hundred times. Unfortunately, mere declarations will not do. We have got to take certain steps to meet the situation. No kind of declaration on paper, no flamboyant statement will do. My friend has asked me to apply the Bengal Famine Code. The circumstances of this distress are so peculiar that even the application of the Famine Code will not do, although the principle underlying the Famine Code will certainly help to solve the problem."

I would ask the honourable members of this House to say what expectations were held out by the Hon'ble Minister in the above declaration. Was it not expected that he was going to provide for relief more liberally than in the Famine Code? I do not think that the Hon'ble Minister is not aware of the provisions of the Famine Code. But it is necessary for me to refer to certain aspects of the Famine Code which most of the members are not aware of. There are certain conditions under which famine is declared under the Famine Code and we have it from the Hon'ble Minister himself that the conditions of Bengal are worse than the conditions required for the application of the Famine Code. Now, Sir, what are the provisions of the Famine Code as to relief? Under section 166 and section 183 of the Famine Code, adult dependants are to receive 12 chhittaks male and 10 chhittaks female and non-working children should have 8 chhittaks food: 8 chhittaks for male children and 8 chhittaks for females. But what is the provision made by the Hon'ble Minister for the children and people of Bengal?

Now, Sir, the provision which he has made in the instructions issued to the Government officers is that gruel would be prepared under the supervision and guidance of Government officers and that it should consist of 2 chhittaks of rice, ½ chhittak of dal and sufficient quantity of water. With regard to the workers, he has made provision that the man who is to work should get a wage which would give him 12 chhittaks of rice. The Famine Code states that a man should get 16 chhittaks of rice for himself and 12 chhittaks each for his family members. But the Hon'ble Minister has not sanctioned the quantity that is prescribed in the Famine Code, and what he has sanctioned is not even sufficient to keep out the distressed from the pangs of hunger in the case of an adult man for more than a couple of

hours out of the 24 hours that he has to live. Now, Sir, in the revised statement the Hon'ble Minister wants to give 6 chhittaks of rice per day and this only after severe criticisms by the people and after thousands of people have died from the effects of the gruel composed of 2 chhittaks of rice and half a chhittak of dal with sufficient quantity of water.

Sir, there is another aspect of the matter which has been lost sight of. Owing to famine conditions prevailing in Bengal there is a deficit of 7 crores of rupees, so far as the Bengal Provincial Budget this year is concerned, and out of this 7 crores we find that 3 crores and 52 lakhs is due to famine condition in Bengal. At page 390 of the Budget you will find, Sir, that 3 crores and 52 lakhs is deficit because of the famine condition of Bengal. Now, let us see what is the effect of the provisions of the Famine Code. With regard to the provisions in the budget for a famine area it has been provided in the Famine Code that if a famine is declared the whole expenditure will have to be charged to the Famine Funds; but if famine was not declared, then the expenses are to go under the head Civil Works and Miscellaneous Works (*vide* section 280, Famine Code). That means that this province will remain bankrupt for several years hereafter and will have to clear up the deficit of 7 crores from the general revenues subsequently. This aspect of the matter has been lost sight of——

Mr. HAMIDUL HUQ CHOWDHURY: I ask what is his relevant authority for the Famine Code from whose provisions he is citing?

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Read and then you will know. Your knowledge is limited.

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA MUKHERJI: I therefore submit that it is essential as stated in the resolution itself that Bengal should be declared a famine area and the provisions of the Famine Code should be——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Your time is up, Mr. Mookerjee. You must resume your seat now. There are other speakers, as you know.

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA MUKHERJI: There may be other speakers; what I must say is that——

Mr. PRESIDENT: I cannot allow you to proceed further. Rai Keshab Chandra Banerjee Bahadur.

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA MUKHERJI: On a point of privilege, Sir. I have ascertained various facts from my tours in many districts with regard to the acute condition now prevailing and my point of privilege is that I want to inform the House and also the Hon'ble Minister with regard to the matters I have ascertained. It is a very serious matter, Sir.

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: May I make a request to the honourable member, Sir? I shall be happy to receive the information that he wants to impart to me at any other time, if it is not possible for him to do so now.

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA MUKHERJI: Sir, the other day I went to see the Hon'ble Minister in his office; I sent my card but he was busy with his work, what work I do not know, but I saw him coming out with his pet dog. I got him on the way and I wanted to speak to him with regard to a serious matter——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Now that Mr. Suhrawardy has promised to receive further information and listen to your suggestions, will you please take your seat and let the Rai Bahadur speak?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: Sir, it is a very unfair statement that the honourable member has made. If I was unable to see him, it must be because I was very busy with my work at the time. If the honourable member takes that sort of attitude towards me, then all I can say is that it is not an attitude of co-operation.

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA MUKHERJI: If I sit down, I do so with a protest that I have not been allowed to say what I wanted to say.

Rai Bahadur KESHAB CHANDRA BANERJEE: Mr. President, Sir, the heart-rending scenes of privation and misery, starvation and death that meet one's eyes at all hours of the day and night in the streets of Calcutta and in the mufassil bring to one's mind the stern fact that there is no Government in this province. The situation in the country-side is still more appalling. The sufferings of the people in the rural areas beggar all description. Those of us in this House who have seen the conditions of life at present prevailing in the villages must admit that nothing but organised relief work and a steady supply of foodstuffs can save Bengal's millions from death.

Sir, one can get in cities like Calcutta and Dacca medical aid and the benefit of canteens and gruel kitchens but to whom will the village people turn for succour in their hour of distress? The villages of Bengal are mostly inhabited by the poorer classes and the sufferings of the middle class families in particular know no bounds. It is this class of people who have been the worst affected by the present situation. They cannot resort to street begging for a morsel of food or a piece of cloth and the only alternative for them is to submit to the inevitable decree of Fate.

Sir, soon after his elevation for the second time to the Ministerial *Gadi* six months ago, our present Food Minister proclaimed with a great fanfare of trumpets that he was determined to bring down the price of rice and to ensure a regular supply of foodgrains all over Bengal. He blatantly accused the previous Ministry of supineness and indifference and we were led to believe that the Hon'ble Sir Nazimuddin and his colleagues would succeed in ushering in the millennium to this country. It would not perhaps be out of place to mention in this connection that the price ruling in the market before my friends opposite assumed charge of office was, if I remember aright, Rs. 14 per maund and within six months of their stewardship it had gone up to Rs. 42 per maund—that is, three times the price at which rice was selling early in March last! Sir, the Hon'ble Mr. Suhrawardy must be a robust optimist, otherwise he would not have ventured to

make a declaration which has ultimately proved to be "full of sound and fury signifying nothing". May I enquire of the Hon'ble the Finance Minister,—I do not find him in his seat at the present moment,—whether there are convincing data to show that as a result of the sale of the essential foodstuffs to the Government employees and the public at concession rates, the loss incurred by Government amounts to not less than Rs. 3½ crores,—2½ crores on account of sales to the public alone as pointed out by the Hon'ble Minister in his Budget statement? May I ask the Hon'ble Minister for Civil Supplies how long was the price level maintained at Rs. 15 per maund, as adumbrated in many of his speeches and how many people were able to take advantage of it? Have any correct records been kept in the mufassil centres to justify the estimate that the sale of rice and other articles of food to the public at concession rates cost the Government 2½ crores of rupees? I pause for a reply.

Sir, I hope I am not crying in the wilderness. The Hon'ble the Minister of Civil Supplies is inattentive. He is moving about the Chamber and not listening to my speech. Sir, it was asserted by certain honourable members during the Budget discussion that the present crisis was due to the exigencies of the war. I join issue with those who hold a contrary opinion. It is to my mind undeniable that the situation has been partially brought about by war conditions. There are other factors also which are responsible for the present state of things and among these may be mentioned the loss of Burma which used to supply one-fifth of our country's needs, profiteering, transport difficulties and last but not the least, the denial policy followed by the Government in Bengal.

Sir, I am not one of those who believe in mud-slinging. I do not think any useful purpose will be served by mutual recriminations. The situation is such as to demand the unstinted co-operation of all sections of the people irrespective of their political creed, caste or colour.

Sir, we meet today under the shadow of a dire catastrophe. We have only heard of the great famine of 1770 which, according to admitted authorities, resulted in the devastation and depopulation of one-third of Bengal. A reference to Hunter will reveal the fact that there is a family likeness between some of the factors responsible for the present crisis and those that led to the famine of 1770. Profiteering is doubtless one of the main causes which is still going on undetected and unchecked. It is no use punishing an ordinary shop-keeper for selling a small quantity of rice, sugar or kerosine oil at rates higher than the controlled rates. Get hold of the big dealers and bring them to book. They are like vampires sucking the life-blood of the people. I cannot believe for a moment that the Government is powerless in this matter. I cannot induce myself to believe that Government through the men of the secret services, such as the Special Branch of the Police, the Intelligence Branch and the Criminal Investigation Department, are unable to unravel the mystery that surrounds the whole affair. Sir, allegations were made the other day by my friend Khan Bahadur Maulvi Abdul Momin and others of bribery and corruption against Government officials. I think every word of what they said was true. My

personal experience is bitter in this respect. I can cite scores of instances to show how under the protection of the police the profiteers have escaped conviction in a court of law and how owing to their connivance the dishonest dealer is thriving at the cost of the tax-payer. In a big mufassil city, the supervision of sale of commodities at controlled rates and the prevention of the surreptitious removal of stocks have been entrusted to the civic guards. They have at times to perform this duty at all hours of the day and night under trying conditions and at great sacrifices of their time and comfort. Under the orders of the local authorities the civic guards have to inform the police for the seizure of any big stock of foodstuffs in order to prevent their sale in bulk or at rates higher than those fixed by Government. Each such detection by the civic guards is followed by a G.D. entry in the police-station. Thereupon, the police appear and seize the stuff. The normal course for the police to adopt in such cases is to hold a formal enquiry and send up the accused for trial. But the fact is that in a majority of cases the traders are allowed to escape scot-free on the ground that their intention is *bona fide*, whereas those that are prosecuted on an apparently unrebuttable evidence come out unscathed, the evidence being so manipulated as to end in an acquittal. Sir, this is what is happening in the mufassil areas. If the guardians of law and order on whom the peace and security of the country depend adopt foul means and protect culprits in the manner indicated, we do not know what is in store for the people of this hapless country——

(Here the honourable member reached the time-limit and resumed his seat.)

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA MUKHERJI: Sir, may I read the statement which my honourable friends Khan Sahib Abul Quasem and Mr. Hamidul Huq Chowdhury wanted?

Mr. PRESIDENT: No, Mr. Mukherji, you have already been allowed more time than is your due, and it would not be in keeping with the practice of the House to allow you further time to read the statement.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: Mr. President, Sir, I have listened to this debate with great interest. Sir, it would seem from the speeches delivered by members of the Opposition that their chief complaint is that the present Council of Ministers does not consist of angels and supermen. Their complaints and criticisms boil down to this that this present Council of Ministers,—particularly the Minister in charge of Food,—are not miracle-workers. Sir, it is an unfortunate situation which has befallen this province of ours. To blame the present Government alone which came into power only about six months ago for this situation and not the previous Ministry who were in office for about 15 months and who left everything in a mess, is simply the height of partisanship and party fanaticism. Sir, Mr. Shrish Chandra Chakraverti and Mr. Haridas Mazumdar expatiated on the great beauty, the great excellence, the great delight of things that prevail in provinces now under section 93 of the Government of India Act. These gentlemen and their compatriots of the Congress, following their

great leader, only about a year ago asked the British to quit India. Now they and their great leader by whom they swear in season and out of season declared that he would rather welcome anarchy than the present administration, are asking that the British should take over the Government of all the Indian provinces including Bengal. That, Sir, is their idea of freedom and independence. Now the cat is let out of the bag. They are so much imbued with malice and jealousy against the present Council of Ministers and their supporters that they would even welcome the autocratic administration of the British people,—a pure and simple unallowed British administration,—rather than an administration carried on by their own countrymen with the help of the elected Legislature.

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHOLANABISH: Is the member entitled to use these words—that members are malicious?

Mr. PRESIDENT: No. I think he should not impute any motive to any honourable member.

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHOLANABISH: Should he not withdraw that word, then?

Alhadj Khan Bahadur Shaikh MUHAMMAD JAN: The honourable member cannot open his mouth without abusing others.

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: May I draw your attention to a distinction in this matter? A member may be wrong in saying that an honourable member is malicious in his statement; but would he be out of order if he said that a particular political party is imbued with malice against the Ministry?

Mr. PRESIDENT: If he makes a general statement like that, then I do not think he is out of order; but if he imputes motives to a particular member of the House, then he is out of order.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: Sir, what I said I will repeat. It is malice which actuates the opponents of the present Government, particularly the Opposition, when they suggest that administration under the operation of section 93 would be better. That is their idea of independence——

Mr. PRESIDENT: I would advise you not to indulge in reflections on a particular individual. You may criticise the Opposition as a whole.

Alhadj Khan Bahadur Shaikh MUHAMMAD JAN: They are always prone to criticise personalities.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: Alhadj Khan Bahadur Shaikh Muhammad Jan, the great protagonist of national freedom and independence, a leader who has no following among Mussalmans, need not interrupt, because I am not casting reflections on any particular individual.

Khan Sahib Maulvi WAHIDUZZAMAN: But you should not be allowed to proceed in the fashion you are doing.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: Yes, I will go on in my way, Khan Sahib Wahiduzzaman, notwithstanding. To resume, Sir, Government

by officials of the Indian Civil Service alone would be welcome to my friends in the Opposition and they would not have anything to do with the advice and control of their countrymen and elected members of the Legislature, because the latter belong to a party which is obnoxious to them. Their idea is not so much to help the people out of this impasse as to get this Government out of power somehow or other. They are not out to solve the food problem but to drive out this Government somehow or other. Therefore, the less said about their mentality, the better. Mr. Lalit Chandra Das has suggested—as though it was a suggestion for which everybody was waiting expectantly—that if Bengal is declared a famine area, then food would at once drop like manna from heaven in immeasurable quantities, as if by magic.

Now, Sir, this suggestion, this originality cannot be matched. Supposing Government had accepted responsibility arising out of declaration of famine—has any Government anywhere in the world ever succeeded in discharging its responsibility fully when it has to fight against incalculable odds? But human nature being as it is, every sensitive person feels shocked at the death of anybody from starvation. But, Sir, all the same, in the ordinary times in the province of Bengal do not the people die of starvation—do not people die from the effects of flood and epidemics and from preventible diseases? Don't you know that a large section of our people are always on the border line of starvation in the ordinary times? When there are epidemics do not people die in spite of the best efforts of the Government? Can you prevent them? Here is a situation which, I should say, is a calamity of an unprecedented nature and magnitude and if every one of us is really anxious that these preventible deaths should not occur, let us give the Government our wholehearted co-operation. Mr. Shrish Chandra Chakraverti said that in the black market rice is selling at Rs. 40, Rs. 50 and Rs. 60 a maund. If that is so, it is his duty as a citizen and a member of the Council to bring specific cases to the notice of the authorities. And unless it is brought to the notice of Government, how can they deal with them? Government is not a machine. If you want these malpractices to be properly dealt with, it is the duty of everyone to bring the cases of malpractice to the notice of the proper authorities, so that proper action may be taken. Unless you do that, how can you expect a remedy? Mere vague general assertions will not do. It will not do simply by declaring that rice is selling in the black market at Rs. 60 a maund and so on and so forth. I can understand what Mr. Mukherji said about the financial burden. But we want food and not money. Then again, Sir, the controlling system has been attacked because control has been introduced before providing for sufficient supplies. Khan Bahadur M. A. Momin has given an effective reply to that——

(Here the member reached time-limit and resumed his seat.)

Mr. KRISHNA CHANDRA ROY CHOWDHURY: Sir, the justification for the deaths of hundreds of people from starvation as explained by my friend Mr. Abul Quasem——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Roy Chowdhury, I think sober and dignified speech creates more impression in the House than excited speech.

Mr. KRISHNA CHANDRA ROY CHOWDHURY: All that I want to say was that no man in Bengal will say that these deaths caused by starvation are natural deaths, as deaths from epidemics and deaths from diseases. I think, Sir, Mr. Quasem's speech should be published in all papers and broadcast to inform the whole population that such a person, such a callous and heartless person, exists on the——

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: This is malicious, Sir.

Mr. KRISHNA CHANDRA ROY CHOWDHURY: It is not malicious at all. This is what every one will feel about your speech. It should be made known that this is what a representative of the people actually said in justification of thousands of deaths from starvation, namely, that these cases are natural cases of death similar to deaths due to epidemics——

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: Sir, this is imputing motive.

Mr. PRESIDENT: As far as I have been able to follow him, I do not think he has imputed motive. But I would ask Mr. Roy Chowdhury again to make his remarks general.

Mr. KRISHNA CHANDRA ROY CHOWDHURY: Sir, in my humble opinion the food situation in the province is setting back the clock of civilisation at an alarming speed. Sir, it seems that the spirit of Satan is dealing fatal blows to the masses and the middle-classes. Deaths from starvation, disease and exhaustion in this city, the city of palaces are increasing by leaps and bounds everyday, and appalling miseries among the masses and the middle-class people are rampant. Children are deserted by their parents and wives are deserted by their husbands. We have also seen in the interior that children, famished and dying, are being devoured by jackals. Children are fighting with dogs in picking up fragments of food from the Corporation dust-bins. Women are almost nude for want of cloth and frequent deaths of infants for want of milk in their mothers' breast are very common scenes nowadays in the streets of Calcutta as well as in the interior. The day before yesterday I saw an infant was dead for want of nourishment and the mother was weeping, but not a single passerby had even expressed a word of consolation. I appealed in vain to my neighbours to spare 4 ounces of milk, out of 50 ounces they consume per household, to save the life of individual infants who are fed on most unwholesome diets and succumb in their mothers' arm. People have become callous to heart-rending sights. What has happened, I wonder, to those patriotic volunteers who cry *Bande Mataram* or *Mahatma-Ki-Jai*, and all those slogans of political freedom? Why they are not coming forward to help these destitutes who scramble daily to go to the control shops or to the free kitchens and who are unable to trace their dear ones? Sir, I do not exaggerate the pathetic incidents at all. What has happened to the patriotic bands of students? Could they not go round and collect old cloths to clothe the nude children and women?

Sir, one of my friends, who was a Government officer and was drawing a fat pay, told me day before yesterday that when he was taking his meal at 10 o'clock in the night, a destitute boy was crying outside his house for food. He asked his servant to shut the gate and tell the boy to go away as he had no food to spare. Subsequently, the boy was found dead that very night in Rashbehari Avenue and was picked up by A.R.P. men. On hearing this my friend said that he was conscience-struck. Sir, all these are caused by scarcity of one particular foodgrain, namely, rice. The Hon'ble the Minister of Food in his revised statement tried to make out or make us believe that the appalling shortage of rice was due to so many causes. Cause No. 1 is the failure of *aus* crop in 1942. This is the statement that was recently broadcasted. The second cause is the failure of *aman* crop in 1942, and his third cause is the damage to crops by last year's cyclone and of course the loss of Burma from which place rice used to be imported into India. I will show that his statement is not accurate or convincing at all or well founded.

Members of this House would remember that in March last the then Minister of Agriculture, who had his brief supplied from the Statistical section of the Agriculture Department, told us that the production of the last winter crop was about normal and that the production of rice, according to his statistical statement, was also normal and was in the neighbourhood of 8 million tons. Mr. Pinnell, I.C.S., C.I.E., an officer who is considered to be more responsible than an average spokesman of the people, and the then Director of Civil Supplies, told us in meetings and discussions that we need not worry about rice, as his crop figures showed that the winter crop would be more or less normal. At the same time, he openly told us that there was profiteering and black marketing going on in the heart of the city and he was helpless. I have demolished the Hon'ble Minister's point No. 1, viz., failure of crops in 1942.

The second point is cyclone damage and natural calamity. It is true, Sir, but the damage was confined to a small portion in the 24-Parganas district and to some portion of the Midnapore district. But this—according to the information obtained from the crop reports—has affected less than 2½ per cent. of the total rice acreage of Bengal. The annual average—I am taking figures from the authoritative book of Sir Azizul Haque, "Man behind the Plough", and this book gives statistics of rice crops for 25 years, from 1911 to 1936,—and the average was 8·1 million tons including periods of damages to crops from floods, cyclones and insufficient rainfall.

(At this stage the honourable member reached the time-limit but was allowed one minute to finish his speech.)

Sir, I will finish by reading a letter from the Hon'ble Minister, written to me on the 25th June. He writes in reply to my appeal in very endearing language and addresses me as "My dear Krishna" and acknowledges receipt of my letter. I appealed to him in June for giving to a relief committee in Ballygunge in which I was interested, rice at controlled rates. He was very sweet in his letter of June, Sir. I wrote to him three more letters for supply of rice at controlled rate to a free

kitchen, but did not hear anything further from him since then. Has not this been done on political grounds, Sir? Is it not politics? Did he not ignore my appeal because I left his party for the time being?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: May I say a word on the last remark of the last speaker? I think it is extremely unfair to me to suggest that I have ever made any difference and have not assisted anyone on the score of politicial affiliations. It is widely known that the greatest amount of assistance has been given by this Government to its politicial opponents, to political opponents who today are utilising the position in which Government has placed them, to attack the Government and to say that they are doing everything and Government is not doing anything. I can assure the House that whenever anyone has come forward to offer assistance to the people of this province—not only the Government as a whole but I personally have done everything in my power to help them.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Sir, may I know if the Hon'ble Minister has risen to make his final reply to the debate?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: Yes.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: In that case, I would bring to the notice of the Chair that there are many other members on this side of the House who would like to speak on this subject. Therefore, I would suggest that the Hon'ble Minister should postpone his reply till tomorrow or the day after to give an opportunity to others who feel very strongly on this food question. Having regard to the great importance of the subject, I think the attempt to finish discussion on one day only is not justified, specially in view of the fact that when Mr. Suhrawardy and his party were in the Opposition, Government at that time gave every facility.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Tomorrow is the non-official day. If the House and the Government agree, that can be arranged and the first hour tomorrow may be devoted to the Food discussion——

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: Sir, if you are pleased to sit till 10 minutes to 12, I have an important meeting at 12.

Mr. PRESIDENT: If you finish your reply by 12 o'clock it will enable you to attend the meeting. But what about the suggestion for taking up the first hour tomorrow for Food discussion?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: I have no objection.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Is that the opinion of the House that we take the first hour tomorrow for Food discussion and then take up non-official business.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: I submit, Sir, that half an hour may be given for Food question tomorrow, because tomorrow is a non-official day.

Mr. PRESIDENT: So many speakers have spoken on this question that it is proper that you should allow Government sufficient time to give a full reply: otherwise the debate becomes useless. All parties in this House are anxious to hear the Government point of view. So, we sit up to 5 minutes to 12 today; and tomorrow I propose to sit a little later than usual.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Sir, it is not my intention, in speaking on this important matter, to emulate the example of Khan Sahib Abul Quasem and to introduce in this debate a degree of heat and excitement which does neither good to himself nor to any party in this House and certainly not to the hundreds of starving people in the streets. It is not my intention to discuss the motion before the House from a party point of view, though unfortunately my friend Khan Sahib Abul Quasem has done so in spite of his protestations to the contrary. I will only request him to remember in this connection that when this very question was discussed before, we tried to look at it from a non-party point of view, so much so that my friend Mr. Abul Quasem himself in his speech some six months ago was compelled to say that some of the speeches on the other side (meaning the Government side) looked almost like a censure on the Government. We were at that time on the Government side: but we did not spare them. I think the honourable members should not have forgotten——

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: Please spare your sermon.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Sir, Mr. Quasem has disturbed the House before and it is not proper for him to disturb the House again.

Now, Sir, coming to the specific items for discussion, I do not want to make a detailed criticism with regard to the causes of the distressing situation. But I should like to touch on one factor, namely, the present war. Some members said that it is a minor factor. But, Sir, the present situation is to a great extent due to the war conditions and the war situation cannot be eliminated from the causes of our distress. For the last six months, both inside this House and outside, we suggested to the last Government as well as to the present Government that they must press the Government of India and of the United Kingdom to abolish the distinction between civil and military supply. The House will no doubt remember that we have repeatedly asked the Government to press the Government of India to abolish this distinction and, if necessary, to force them to provide adequate transport facilities, for the supply of food for civilian needs. If the Central Government are not prepared to co-operate with Bengal, I suggest to the Bengal Government that they should force the hands of the Central Government by imposing *octroi*. But, I believe the Government of India are co-operating with the present Government. If the present Government is not satisfied with the co-operation that the Government of India is now giving to them, if the present Government thinks that even today transport facilities are not sufficient and that more transport facilities are required, they can use the same device of *octroi* and force the Central Government to place more transport at the disposal of the present Government.

Sir, one of the main causes which has been referred to by speakers on the other side of the House as well as on this side is the existence of corruption. Sir, there is an English saying that the herring rots from the head, and unfortunately, Sir, in the present Government, corruption prevails everywhere: it exists even in the highest quarters. So, Sir, if the corruption is not rooted out at the top, a higher officer cannot stop the corruption that exists among his subordinates. When the subordinate officer will be taken to task, he will turn round and say that he is only following in the footsteps of his superior officer. Therefore, I would suggest to the present Government, as we have suggested to the past Government, that they must bring to book any officer who may be guilty of such corruption, whoever he may be and whatever his position either in the political world or in the social life of Bengal might be. I would suggest to the present Government that unless corruption is checked at the root or at the source, they cannot stop it—once it spreads among the lower ranks.

Again, Sir, there is so much talk about black markets. With regard to this, I would suggest that if Government keep the statistics of goods that come from different provinces as well as of the articles of food that are produced in this province, if they take the responsibility for feeding the people of the province, if they take the responsibility for procuring supplies of foodstuffs and their distribution to the different areas, if the whole market is stabilised and uniformised,—if I can coin the word,—then I think there will be no room for black markets.

I submit, Sir, for the consideration of the Hon'ble Minister in charge of Civil Supplies that there has been a singular lack of co-ordination in the activities of the present Government. The Government had no clear picture before them when they launched the anti-hoarding drive to which the unfortunate people of Bengal have given the name of anti-food drive which took place in all the mufassil areas of Bengal in the month of June. But, Sir, at that time Calcutta and Howrah were left out and in spite of the reasons put forward by the Hon'ble Minister in charge, the people are not satisfied as to why Howrah and Calcutta were left out. Sir, even in this drive there was a singular lack of co-ordination which has been responsible to a large extent for the impasse in which we find ourselves at the present moment. Again, Sir, they showed their lack of a plan when they introduced different rates of prices of rice in the province on different dates. It was promulgated by the present Government that after September 10, the price of rice would be Rs. 24 and after September 25, the price of rice would be Rs. 20. Sir, this interval of 15 days destroyed altogether the equilibrium of the market. It did not allow the traders to increase their stocks or carry on normal trade. With the certainty that there would be a sudden alteration of price levels, all trade was practically at a standstill. Stocks do not arrive on the day of the order. Hence, how could a trader place an order on the 9th, when he knew that from the 10th there would be a different price? Sometimes an order is placed on the 9th and the goods do not arrive till after the 25th.

Here the loss would be heavy and certain. Therefore, he does not take that risk. I am not talking only of wholesalers but also of retailers. These retailers were not able to place orders and therefore the market ran dry. Unsettlement of the market for 15 days is, therefore, the chief cause of shortage of supply. When there is this amount of hoarding and corruption going on in this way, I would ask why is it that the Government who have a large Intelligence Branch, a Criminal Investigation Department which goes into the houses of the people on all sorts of possible and imposible pretexts, why cannot the Government find out these hoards? I believe some sort of food census was taken in June and it was subsequently applied to Calcutta and Howrah.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Your time is nearly up, Mr. Kabir. You must therefore cut short your speech.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: All right, Sir, I ask why could not Government get hold of the stocks before the market suddenly ran dry? Unless there is stabilisation in the market, the traders cannot have any assurance of normal business and cannot go on with their business. Therefore, this lag of 15 days was a great mistake on the part of Government. They should have made the purchases themselves and distributed the quantities in a normal manner to the different areas.

About rationing in Calcutta, we find that there is going to be a change in the system. Sometime ago, an elaborate enumeration had taken place all over the city and we were told that rationing would be soon introduced. In fact, it was during the regime of the past Government that directions were given for rationing and we protested at the time that if Government without making proper arrangements introduced rationing, they would be guilty of a grave mistake. They had not then completed their preparations and at the same time announced the introduction of the rationing system. It was, therefore, bound to lead to the black market, to disturbance of normal trade and consequent sufferings by the people. The present Government is also following in the footsteps of its predecessor in changing their plans from day to day. About two or three days ago, we saw in the papers that the old scheme which was on the basis of the family unit is going to be changed into one of individual units. Sir, what is the difference between the two? Is it for this reason that two Government officers were deputed to Bombay? Is it because in England this individual rationing system obtains? Is it expected that on the introduction of rationing on the basis of the individual unit, every man, woman and child of a family will go to the shops and purchase things for himself or herself? If the messing unit were there, then I think rationing could be introduced much quicker than is expected under the new scheme. The whole thing may now have to be postponed, as another fresh enumeration would be necessary. I know that my time is up. I would, therefore, conclude by saying that the present Ministry—I do not deny that they have tried to do something—have made a wrong approach. They will be guilty of a grave offence and History, when it is impartially written, will not pardon them, because they declared that in

Bengal there was a surplus of rice when as a matter of fact the Hon'ble Minister himself and his department and almost everybody knew that famine conditions were obtaining in the country. It was the obvious duty of Government to put every possible pressure on the Central Government and the British Government to bring supplies from outside. It was their obvious duty to declare Bengal a famine area. The House was also insistent on this. We all demanded that Bengal be declared a deficit province and supplies brought from surplus provinces. I believe the Hon'ble Minister will realise that he did a very great disservice to the country in not doing so and therefore our misery, and our sufferings are due to this initial mistake, this initial error committed by him as a result of which today in Bengal millions of people are starving.

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHOLANABISH: Sir, I do not want to draw a picture of the misery in Bengal for want of food. The position of Bengal is beyond description: it has been described within this Chamber and outside times without number and it is unnecessary and useless for me to repeat the same over again. To put it briefly, the situation is absolutely hopeless and I need hardly say that unless immediate action is taken, there will be death in millions in this province within the next two months. Bengal is now begging for food from its neighbours, from countries outside India; and though we feel grateful to our neighbouring provinces and to those who are sending help in money and in kind, I cannot but feel a sense of shame and humiliation that today Bengal is a beggar at the doors of others. The poignancy of our distress is heightened by the fact that Bengal is not actually poor: Bengal does produce her own food sufficient to maintain her people. She is really in the position of an heiress who, having inherited a large fortune, finds herself in the position of a street beggar because of the bungling of her manager, who either has stolen or squandered away her money and inheritance. It is no use quarelling over what has happened in the past. The point for consideration is: what is the remedy. I shall be much obliged if the Hon'ble Minister in charge of Civil Supplies would give us an indication as to what he actually proposes to do and what are his plans for the next three months, and also what he actually proposes to do for carrying on his scheme after the next harvest is reaped. Before we consider what remedy is necessary, we ought to try to find out the real cause of this misery, this want. If we go into the matter in detail, I think it would not be very difficult for us to find out the real cause. The war has been going on for the last four years but this state of affairs did not happen even after Burma was taken by the Japanese. The position to my mind is due to mishandling of the situation. The war has contributed to a certain extent towards this state of affairs, but I think the main cause is the mishandling by the last as well as by the present Ministry. I submit, Sir, that the main reason for this abnormal high price of rice and other foodgrains was due to undue and extraordinarily heavy pressure of buying in the market. Government's policy of trying to supply articles of food, particularly rice, to its employees gradually started the raising of prices. Government in all its departments, the

railways and other institutions, industrialists, big employers of labour, all these bodies finding that the price of rice was gradually increasing thought that they also should purchase for their employees. Government agents who were employed in this work not only purchased for Government but also for their private purposes. Due to war conditions some people have become rich and are thus able to offer any price for rice. The result was that the price of rice rose up to Rs. 40 or 45 per maund. At that time the Government for the purpose of supplying its own employees thought that they were not getting supplies because of the restriction and the price-control. Then, it was thought by the then Ministry that de-control and free trade would help them. That was the greatest bungling that the last Ministry did. It was on the 18th of May that the Government of India at the request of the Government of Bengal withdrew all restrictions and insisted on free trade. Now, Sir, result of that was so disastrous that within a week or two the price of rice went to the highest pitch of Rs. 35 or Rs. 40. During the food debate in the last session in this House, I said that this was the greatest mistake and that policy ought to be changed. It was changed no doubt after two or three weeks by the Central Government, I believe, at the request of the Government of Bengal; but unfortunately it was too late as the prices having once gone up require a long time to come down, because the traders who purchased at higher prices would not ruin themselves by selling at lower rates——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Moholanabish, you have to finish now.

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHOLANABISH: All right, Sir, I resume my seat.

Rai Sahib JOGENDRA NATH RAY: Mr. President, Sir, the picture that we are daily witnessing all round us is too painful to imagine. I shall here only concentrate my analysis to some definite suggestions which, I think, may help the progress of amelioration of the condition of our people.

My first suggestion is that the province should be divided into two principal areas—one consisting of the rural areas and another comprising of the urban areas, including Calcutta. Bengal is chiefly a country of villages where about 80 per cent. of her people live. Let these villages be self-contained, having their own produce reserved for them. Let the towns be for the present fed chiefly by imports of foodgrains from outside. The whole of India is today extending her hands for Bengal's help. It will also be possible for the Government to introduce in towns a proper rationing system and some sort of well-arranged plan for equal distribution of foodstuffs among the people. It may be that in some rural areas the stock of rice may be short. In that case, let it be supplemented by import from other rural areas of Bengal where it is surplus. Plainly speaking, the rural areas with 80 per cent. of the entire population of the province must be left to feed their population with their own produce. There should also be introduced into these areas a fixed maximum price of rice not exceeding Rs. 10 a maund. Powers should be given to union boards to be exercised

strictly under the supervision of the Circle Officers and Subdivisional Officers to take necessary action against unusual hoarding and black marketing in those rural areas. The union boards should take a census of the total stock of rice in each house and also ascertain how much of it is necessary for the members of the house till the next harvesting of crops, so that after deducting that amount the surplus, if any, may be sold within the respective areas among other people who are short of food at controlled price before the surplus is exported to other deficit rural areas. After meeting the proper needs of the rural areas, if any surplus is left, it may be exported to towns. I hope this process will also do another good. Towns are now too much congested. The attention of the people will be drawn towards the village and they will take up their residence there leaving the towns. If the people of villages are convinced that their produce will be utilised chiefly for their benefit, they will also try to devote their attention towards growing more food on their lands. Attempts must be made in these rural areas to take a census of the total produce of rice, total requirements of the people of the respective areas and for equal distribution thereof among the people of different rural areas of different districts. But in no case shall the census be made to seal up the hoard for the purpose of transferring them for the big merchants in towns or for big mills and railways or for the military. The principle should be that the produce of the rural areas will be chiefly meant for the people of those areas and if after proper census and careful investigation and equal distribution among all rural areas of other deficit districts there be found any surplus food, that surplus may be exported to towns.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I hope Rai Sahib you will finish within two minutes. There is another speaker whom I must give a chance and then adjourn the House.

Rai Sahib JOGENDRA NATH RAY: All right, Sir.

My second suggestion is that the Government should stop at once the practice of purchasing by the big mills, railways, workshops, etc.

Before I conclude this review of the whole situation, I must add a few words about another matter. I find with utmost regret that there is going on between the members of this Ministry and those of the last much exchange of hot words, assigning responisibility for the present crisis to each other. This is indeed extremely unjustifiable. It must be admitted that the present Ministry has begun with a legacy—the inevitable result of which would have been the present crisis, even if the last Ministry would have been in power at the present time. The ball that was set rolling long, long ago is sure to reach this goal in spite of all genuine attempts to stop its course. So, instead of accusing this Ministry or that Ministry it will be fairer on our part if we try to examine how much this Ministry are trying to cope with the situation. And in that respect I must frankly admit that the Hon'ble Mr. Suhrawardy and his colleagues are trying their level best to ease and pacify the situation. We all notice that innumerable free gruel kitchens

have been opened in mufassil towns and villages, rice is being distributed among the people at concession rates and shops have been opened where *atta* and sugar are being supplied at the controlled rates. But they are not sufficient to cope with the gigantic crisis. The Government must adopt other suitable measures to ease the heavy strain that has fallen upon the poor middle-class people who can neither beg nor express their misery but have to endure their troubles as dumb creatures. I may well mention here that in my subdivision of Asansol about 42 free kitchens have been started up to this date. Four such kitchens for the town have been placed under my humble care and control, as I happen to be the Chairman of the Asansol Municipality. About 1,000 are daily being fed there. But the rush on these kitchens is too great for the authorities to cope with, with the result that Asansol along with the rest of the province, is daily witnessing such ghastly scenes of starvation and devastation as have not been heard of in any civilised country in modern times.

Mr. SACHINDRA NARAYAN SANYAL: Sir, since the promulgation of the Ordinance by the present Government fixing the price of rice the situation has become very serious and might be called desperate. Rice has completely disappeared from the market and in the mufassil and village markets, rice is not at all available for some time past. Dealers from Calcutta and agents from mercantile firms go to the mufassil and purchase rice at very easy rates which make rice fly away from the mufassil areas. In Calcutta it has become practically impossible to purchase rice. In the mufassil areas shop-keepers and dealers should be supplied with sufficient quantities of rice for sale to the public at controlled rates. During the few months that have elapsed since we last met, the food situation in Bengal has become worse than ever. It is admitted that no courageous steps have been adopted in the past to cope with this serious crisis which indicates the prevalence of famine conditions and it is our bounden duty to try to get over this crisis today. Sir, I hail from the district of Rajshahi which has never been a deficit district so far as rice is concerned. But today I find that people of this district are starving to death, and there are sometimes fierce fights for getting small supplies of rice among people from the other side of the river. Controlled shops and food committees exist only in name. They are powerless and without resources. In this hour of distress it is no use trying to throw blame on *X*, *Y* or *Z*, or on Government and use strong and harsh words. It is time for concerted action. Let us in this calamity forget our party affiliation, our minor dispute and let us all join hands in formulating the food plan. Let us present a united front so that the Government of India may be forced to grant us facilities by which there would be easy flow of foodgrains from the surplus provinces and also from the States for this purpose.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The House stands adjourned till 9 a.m. tomorrow.

Adjournment.

The Council then adjourned till 9 a.m. on Friday, the 24th September, 1943.

The following members were absent from the meeting held on the 23rd September, 1943:—

(1) Khan Bahadur Naziruddin Ahmad.

(2) Mr. Hamidul Huq Chowdhury.

(3) Mr. Kamini Kumar Dutta.

(4) Mr. Mohamed Hossain.

(5) Maulana Muhammad Akrum Khan.

(6) Mr. R. S. Purssell.

(7) Khan Bahadur Kazi Abdur Rashid.

(8) Dr. Kumud Sankar Ray.

(9) Dr. Kasiruddin Talukdar.

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BENGAL LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DEBATES

Third Session, 1943—No. 7.

THE COUNCIL met in the Legislative Chamber of the Legislative Building, Calcutta, on Friday, the 24th September, 1943, at 9 a.m., being the seventh day of the Third Session of 1943, pursuant to section 62(2) (*a*) of the Government of India Act, 1935.

Mr. President (the Hon'ble Sir BIJOY PRASAD SINGH ROY, K.C.I.E.), was in the Chair.

Special Motion.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I call upon the Hon'ble Mr. Suhrawardy to reply to the debate, and after he has given his reply I shall call upon the mover of the Special Motion and give him ten minutes to exercise his right of reply; and then if the Hon'ble Minister thinks it necessary to reply to any new point that might arise, I will give him five minutes for that.

Rai Bahadur KESHAB CHANDRA BANERJEE: On a point of information, Sir. The Hon'ble the Revenue Minister undertook to answer a question today which had remained unanswered on the first day of the meeting this session. He promised to read out a statement which he had placed in the Library.

Mr. PRESIDENT: There is no question on the agenda today. The Hon'ble Minister might have promised to give reply to the question referred to but as there is no question on the agenda to-day, the matter cannot be dealt with now.

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: Mr. President, Sir, without meaning any disrespect to this House, I hope I shall be pardoned if I say that the unreality of a debate on the food situation at the present juncture and of the arguments repeatedly thrashed out on the floor of the House are amply demonstrated by the fact that there are hardly sufficient members present in the House to form a quorum. (Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Ten members form a quorum here and I believe there is double that number present now.) I am afraid that the debates in this Legislature instead of offering any concrete suggestions, instead of being helpful, instead of making any attempt at organising the people to meet the situation, are nothing else but pegs upon which to show up the Ministry and the Government in the worst possible light as a part of the propaganda of the party opposed to this ministry. I say this, Sir, with a heavy heart, because there is much work to be done. The work in the Legislature on this occasion has certainly impeded a good deal of administrative work which was of very great urgency, and therefore in view of the sacrifices that are

being made by Government, one might have expected that the critics of Government at any rate should have been here in sufficient number to listen to Government's reply on this food question.

Sir, I will deal with the points that have been raised by Mr. Lalit Chandra Das in his speech and I hope that it will be amply demonstrated to the House that Government have taken all possible steps to meet the situation however inadequate they may have been, in view of the unpreparedness in which they found themselves and in view of the shortness of the supplies at their disposal.

I will deal with the speech of Mr. Das rather than with the motion he has moved; and probably in dealing with his speech I shall be able to answer the points raised in his motion.

In the first place, Mr. Das has again trotted out the old old story that I had stated in the beginning when I assumed office that there was no shortage of foodgrains within the Province. Again, he has referred to certain statements which appeared in the *Bengal Weekly* of the 10th May in which I have attempted to allay the panic which had been aroused and which had led to general hoarding amongst traders and big agriculturists for purposes of profit, amongst small agriculturists—partly for profit and partly against shortage and amongst the consumers who used to buy daily from the market but who thought it necessary to lay by stocks for themselves,—as all these factors were responsible for driving away rice from the market at a very crucial moment. Now, Sir, again I say that if I had ever said that there was sufficiency, it was based on the promises of supplies to this province which had not been redeemed by the Government of India and also promises of sufficiency of transport. In that very same Weekly on another page I made a statement countering the propaganda carried on by Mr. Fazlul Huq and his associates that high prices and shortages of foodgrains were not the creation of the last fortnight. In the very same Note which has been referred to by Mr. Das,—if you read the whole Note you will find it stated by me that wheat, maize, bajra *are in excess* of Bengal's needs and are now being received from the Government of India. There are, I think, slight errors. This is a sort of paraphrase of the statement which I actually made and which was to the effect that *there would be* a sufficiency if the supplies from the Government of India were received;— and the supplies which had been promised to us were in the region of 7,74,000 tons. If this quantity or anything like that had been received from the Government of India during the time when we needed it most, I think we could still have met the situation. There would have been scarcity, there would have been distress, but there would not have been this famine. We never received the supplies. To-day we hear—I have not seen it—that the Railways by advertisement have been trying to exculpate themselves by pointing out that they have transported to Bengal foodgrains in vast quantities in spite of the fact that the Damodar has been breached. It is a matter of regret that one-sided picture only has been painted by the Railways. I do not know why the Railways have done so except probably to exculpate themselves at the bar of public opinion or before still higher authorities. It

was decided between the Railways and ourselves that there would be no such talk in future and that no opportunity would be given to create an impression either against the Railways or against the Government. It is a pity that the Railways have broken the agreement which was arrived at between ourselves, and I think that this attempt on the part of the Railways or rather this belated attempt at exculpation is due to the very trenchant remarks made by Sir Chotturam and Sirdar Baldeo Singh, Ministers of the Punjab Government, namely, that while foodgrains were available on the platforms in the Punjab, transport was not available; and even though transport was available, the organisation was so defective that it could not contact each other. The actual fact is: that ever since the railways have awakened to the reality of the situation, ever since Sir Edward Benthall has been taking a deep personal interest in the movement, supplies have begun to flow into Bengal in adequate quantities. In the beginning, we were told by Major General Wood that he would send so much wheat to Bengal as we would not know how to deal with. We made out a plan of distribution for 30,000 tons a month passing through the mills. And in two months before August, namely, in June and July we got 16,000 tons and 18,000 tons respectively. We never had sufficient even for the mills and the *chakis;* that is the reason why from time to time supplies of *atta* dried up in the markets of Calcutta. Even in the beginning of August, there was no sufficient flow of supplies, and it was only towards the latter end of August and in the last two weeks of the current month that supplies have begun to flow in larger and larger quantities, with the result that the mills are now hard at work turning out *atta* for the market. And it is for this reason that we shall shortly be able to place at least 40,000 maunds of *atta* a day in the markets of Calcutta. (Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: What about the mufassil?) So far as the mufassil is concerned, it has been arranged in the Punjab that the entire quota of 96,000 tons of *atta*—of which probably 10,000 tons have already been supplied, leaving a balance of 86,000 tons—would be attempted to be supplied within three months. This means that about 26 to 28,000 tons a month not of wheat but of wheat products, that is to say, *atta* and flour ready milled and ready for consumption would be sent directly to the various mufassil districts from the Punjab. If this could be sent, it would mean about 6 laks maunds spread out. The price would be six annas a seer throughout Bengal. I do not know whether it would be possible to arrange this work up to that degree but these are our target figures. The matter does not rest with the Government of Bengal; the matter rests with the other Governments and with the railways. The procurement remains with our agent at Lahore. Sir, in this connection I would like to reply to the question which has been asked as to why Mr. N. M. Khan has been sent over to Lahore. Sir, he has been sent to Lahore being entrusted with the very responsible task of watching on behalf of the Government of Bengal that the procurement of wheat, as promised by the Government of the Punjab, continues satisfactorily. He is to remain in constant touch with the Government of the Punjab and place before that Government Bengal's point of view. He is also to see that the supply of wheat products to the

mufassil districts is maintained up to the plan and that as much wheat products as possible are procured for the mufassil districts——

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Can you not arrange for his permanent transfer to the Punjab so that he may always remain there?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: I think that if Mr. Khan is transferred permanently to the Punjab, Bengal Government will lose one of its best officers. I have had the pleasure and distinction of weighing various officers who have come under my purview and I have not the least hesitation in paying a tribute to his integrity, courage of conviction, honesty and ability, on the floor of this House. Mr. Lalit Chandra Das has said that my statement, of which he read out one or two sentences, has done incalculable harm to the cause of Bengal. I deny it for several reasons—because I know what the facts are and Mr. Das does not know what the facts are. He is only beating the drum of political propaganda of the Opposition. The fact is that the atmosphere, the mentality created in the Government of India and amongst other provinces by the late Chief Minister, Mr. Fazlul Huq, viz., that Bengal needs no help from outside, was very difficult to eradicate; and it is only very recently that the Government of India have realised the conditions that are prevailing in Bengal. It is only very recently that I have been able to convince them that it is the duty of the Government of India and of all other parties concerned to come to the assistance of the Government of Bengal at this juncture——

Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTY: After the people are dying in hundreds and thousands.

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: It is not a question of "after the people are dying". There are people who are dying and there are people who are alive. Now, Sir, as I have repeatedly pointed out, at the last Food Conference at Delhi which I attended I found the atmosphere was hostile to Bengal. At first I was unable to understand why it was so hostile to us, as I did not know the previous history of the Food Conference. Then, the revelation by Sir Azizul Haque gave a clue to the whole situation and also explained why the Government of India were so fundamentally of the opinion that Bengal had sufficient food. I have seen some statements ascribing motives in respect of a distinguished permanent official of the Government who went to the conference. I have seen the report and I believe that there has been a great misunderstanding. Mr. Pinnell is supposed to have stated that he was not interested in the excess quantity of foodgrains or that he has no plans. That was not what he said: he said that when suitable time arrives and the next item is taken up, he would place before the conference the Government of Bengal's position with regard to the food situation. However, Sir, I found the atmosphere at the Food Conference hostile and I tried to convince them about the real position of Bengal but was not able to convince them. But fortunately for Bengal, a distinguished son of Bengal, Sir Azizul Haque, was then in charge of the Food Department, who by his personal knowledge of affairs in Bengal was able to change some of the views of the Government of India. Now we have as

Food Member Sir Jawala Prosad Srivastava who is taking a keen interest and is convinced of the fact that Bengal needs as much help as the whole of India can possible give it. And again, Sir, I ask: what does it matter if I have said about sufficiency or otherwise? I was determined from the beginning to organise Bengal on famine basis. We are pushing on relief operations everywhere and wherever it is possible. On the 18th of August I issued a statement which forcibly brought home to all the District Officers the necessity of setting up relief committees but that was not the beginning of the operation. That was the beginning of a wide-spread organisation. In Noakhali, Chittagong, Murshidabad, Bhola, that is, in all places where there was distress, relief organisations and relief kitchens have been set up long before I issued that statement. Now, Sir, there are one or two points which have been raised by the honourable members as to why we had not declared Bengal a famine area. Sir, let us not keep away from the real situation. Bengal as a whole is not in the grip of famine. What I mean to say by this is that every single part of Bengal is not in the grip of famine and that if anybody says that every part of Bengal is in the grip of famine, he does not know what he is talking about. Now, there are some areas where there is great distress but that is not famine as visualized by the Famine Code. There is sectional famine, there is class famine, there is a section of people who cannot afford to buy foodgrains or even the ordinary vegetables or other commodities at the prices which now prevail. They are in great distress and if the appellation of famine cannot be applied to them, they are certainly famine-stricken. This is the condition of the people even where there is surplus of foodgrains and that is due to the fact that the milk of human kindness has to a large extent been dried up in the human breast. The villagers themselves who formerly used to maintain the poor people of their own villages have ceased to do so, because they say they have not foodgrains in their own house. There are so many people in this country who are perennially on the verge of starvation, there are people who cannot get one meal in two days, there are people who cannot get more that one meal a day even in the most prosperous times, even when the price of rice was Rs. 4-8, and so you can understand what their condition is or is likely to be if the price of rice is Rs. 35 or Rs. 25 or even Rs. 20. There is no Poor Law in this country as there is in other countries. There is no constitutional liability upon any local authority to look after the poor and the destitute——

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: On a point of information, Sir. Is it the contention of the Hon'ble Minister that that sort of poverty prevails all over Bengal?

Mr. PRESIDENT: That is not a point of information.

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: Sir, if I am interrupted like this, I am afraid I cannot proceed. What I am saying is an absolute fact and everybody knows about it. I say, Sir, that the extent of distress that now prevails here would have brought about social revolution in other parts of the world; but the people of our country who are perennially on the

verge of starvation and distress year after year even in the most prosperous times, you can understand what their condition is likely to be when the prices are rising to such a great extent, but still that is not famine. You think that is famine but that is not so. Certain areas are certainly in the grip of famine; there is no question about it that in certain areas there is a great shortage of food, acute shortage of food. As I have stated over and over again and as has been pointed out by one honourable member, a mere declaration of famine in a particular area is not sufficient. You must get on to the job of relieving the distress, and that is the thing which we are doing to the utmost of our capacity and resources. In some particulars we have gone beyond the Famine Code in giving relief. There are certain items which you will find if you will look through the Famine Code in the Famine Manual, viz., the duty of observing, which is cast on charitable and non-official organisations, it being expressly stated that it is not the duty of Government to relieve the people in respect of those items. But I may tell the House that in respect of those items even, Government has taken all the responsibility. But in respect of other matters Government has not been able to fulfil its liabilities, and I do not deny that. One gentleman pointed out yesterday that under the Famine Code Government must provide 8 *chhitaks* or half a seer of rice to an adult and six *chhitaks* to a child and so on.

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA MUKHERJEE: I said 8 *chhitaks* to a non-working child and 12 *chhitaks* to an adult.

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: Well, Sir, I would love to give them one seer and more; but tell me from where all that is to come? You cannot shirk your responsibility; you have got to do the best with the resources at your disposal. (Mr. HARIDAS MAJUMDAR: That is not the position.) But that is the way I look at it. I consider it my duty not to run away but to try and save the people by giving them foodgrains as much as possible. That life has not been saved in certain quarters there is no denying. The deaths in the streets of Calcutta are an ample evidence of the fact that we have not been able to maintain life everywhere. But the main point is: where are we to get the foodgrains from? It is all right to say—"give so much". We are trying our best to do so, but no one can come and say: "let there be a rain of grains" and there will be a rain of grains. Steps should have been taken in this matter at the very beginning, but not now when it is almost too late. When we came to power, or rather when we assumed office, what was the situation? We were living absolutely from hand to mouth. A few wagons of rice were coming from Orissa only and that was going to feed the city of Calcutta and the affected areas of Howrah and Midnapore. That was all that was at our disposal. Have I not pointed out to this House a hundred times that when I insisted that free trade should be established there were only 54,000 maunds of rice in our possession in Calcutta and that with this 54,000 maunds of rice Government was charged with the responsibility of keeping the control shops that were devouring 136,000 maunds of rice per month? At the time when we should have procured the stocks, at the time when we should have distributed

the stocks, at the time when we should have organised, at that moment nothing was done for creating a reserve. After all this, you now say "you should not do this, you should not do that".

Well, Sir, my energies were directed firstly towards procurement because without it you would have nothing to distribute. I have been trying to impress on the Government of India that we must have supplies, supplies and supplies. The free-trade brought into Bengal a certain amount of supplies. As a matter of fact, it brought more than was sent by the Government of India before or after and it has no doubt had the effect of easing the situation considerably. It permitted the sending of foodgrains to the acutely distressed areas: it enabled us to keep the food-control shops here going instead of having to close down for want of supply: it permitted certain priorities over here to get their share of the supplies and at the same time it enabled the employers to go out and purchase foodgrains themselves for their employees—which they are now stocking.

Mr. K. C. ROY CHOWDHURY: The merchants are making a hundred per cent. profit.

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: My friend Mr. Krishna Chandra Roy Chowdhury is somewhat mistaken. I do not care at the moment what profit the merchants make so long as supplies are brought to this province. The main thing is supply. If I were to look at the profits of the merchants with disfavour, what would have occurred? The supplies would not have come and we would be in considerable difficulty. All that came to Bengal from outside and also all that had been purchased within the province were there: so without any profit to the merchants it came into the hands of the Government of Bengal. The merchants who bought them up paid more than we paid. An embargo was placed by the various Governments on the movement of foodgrains from outside into Bengal and it compelled the merchants to sell to the Government of Bengal these foodgrains without profit; otherwise they would not have been allowed to move these foodgrains. But the main fact is that when supplies were dried up in Bengal, you must try to get foodgrains: you cannot do anything with money only. Any amount of money can be scattered throughout the length and breadth of the province; but that will not do. We want to feed the masses; so it is necessary that foodgrains should be brought into Bengal.

Then, Sir, another point which has been raised is this: why have we issued the price-control order without securing sufficient supply. I do not think that anybody who really has regard for the people of Bengal will make a statement like this except for political propaganda. Prices were rising so speedily that it became necessary to issue this order—it was necessary to put some check on it. If we had not issued this order, you would have seen that the price of rice would have risen to Rs. 60 or Rs. 70 a maund—not in the black market but in the open market throughout Bengal—that would have been the result. At the present moment, we are able to supply rice to some people at least at the control price. Then, Sir, it is essential that

with the harvesting of the *aman* crop we should force the price down so that the agriculturists and traders may not profiteer at the expense of the consuming public. We know the economic theory that price-control cannot be enforced satisfactorily without a black market unless there are sufficient supplies. But knowing fully well—and that was the statement which I made before the Food Control Committee—knowing fully well that I did not have the supplies, I had taken the risk of enforcing the price-control by sheer executive force, and as time passes, if we see that grains are being withheld we shall continue to take more and more powers and take more and more drastic steps in order to see that the grain comes on to the market. There are certain reasons why we have not done so up to now. One of the reasons is: that I want you gentlemen who are here to do something constructive in your own locality. If you have got any influence in your locality, go and tell your agriculturists that they should bring out and put all their stocks on the market; tell the agriculturists that it may be that some of them may by selling rice at Rs. 40 or Rs. 50 be richer than the *mahajans* or the landlords, but the majority of the people will be killed. It is your duty to go and tell the agriculturists to place their stocks on the market and revive the trade once more. Instead of this, you are creating the impression that price-control can never succeed because the supplies are not there. It was not possible for us to have price-control through free trade, because we had to get supplies from outside and there were no supplies inside; but there is no reason why given sufficient co-operation from you, given a better understanding, a better atmosphere, we will not succeed in this price-control, when we are getting some supplies not only from outside but internally through the medium of the *aus* crop. Now that supplies are coming, price-control can be introduced. Personally speaking, I feel that we have introduced it at the psychological moment when price-control can be made successful. Now, Sir, I wish to reiterate in the House quite definitely and clearly that price-control has come to stay and that we are determined to enforce it in every possible manner, if it is found that the agriculturist is not placing his stocks in the market and then, believe me, the agriculturist will come in for a very bad day. He is not going to be allowed to do that either from the side of the Government or from the side of the public.

Now, so far as the traders are concerned, we have been extremely lenient and extremely generous to them. Let me tell you what our present position is. Distribution of supplies that can be done at the beginning of the season cannot be done at the end; it can be done for a new crop but it cannot be done when the year is dying and the crop is getting exhausted. What have we done to the traders? We gave them ample time to unload their stocks in the market. We gave them time to sell their stocks at whatever price they liked and at that time they disposed of a considerable portion of their stock or nearly all their stocks to the consumers or the employers. And thereafter we told the traders "we shall support you in every possible manner, go and trade". The view-point which I have taken is that it is the traders and the traders alone—as we have not got sufficient

executive machinery to carry out the process—who can get the grain out of the agriculturists. It is the trader who has got the whole link. The retailer buys from the wholesalers; the wholesaler buys from the mill, which in its turn buys from the *aratdar*, *beparis* and *farias* who go out to the villages and buy from the agriculturists. The whole chain is there and is perfectly established. Therefore, from that point of view the trader is the best agency both for procurement as well as for distribution. We shall, therefore, call upon the trade to do its best and we will support them; but the moment a trader starts profiteering, he will be put out of action. Similarly, we hope he will realise that we are in earnest in carrying out our price-control order, and hope that when the new price of Rs. 20 a maund comes into force, he will make every possible effort to continue his business till the end of the season. Let it be clearly understood also that when the time comes, not now but when the time comes, when the psychological time comes, Government will so reduce the price of rice and other foodgrains that the new crop when it comes to the market will be sold at a price which will be fair both to the agriculturist and to the consumer also; and next year if we continue to remain at the helm of affairs, we shall do our level best—none can say more than that—to see that this sort of profiteering,—purchasing at a low rate and selling at a much higher rate,—does not operate any longer; that if you purchase at a low rate, the same prices will continue to be maintained until the end of the season or until the new harvest comes in. That is the policy which we have fixed for the next year.

There is one other point which I wish to make clear on the floor of the House and that is regarding the wheat——

Mr. PRESIDENT: How long will you take, Mr. Suhrawardy?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: Probably about ten minutes more.

Mr. PRESIDENT: For, after you have finished, I propose to give ten minutes to Mr. Das if he wants to reply to your speech. And after that if you like to reply to any further new point in Mr. Das's speech, I shall give you 5 minutes. This will take us to 10 o'clock——

Mr. MESBAHUDDIN AHMAD: To day being a Friday, we don't like to sit beyond 11-30 a.m., Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: All right.

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: One thing in regard to wheat from the Punjab. I made it quite clear in my public statements here as well as in Delhi and Lahore that in the beginning when wheat came to us, we were absolutely new to the wheat market. We were told that wheat would be coming in such large quantities to this province that the mills would not be able to utilise them and that we shall have to handle the wheat ourselves. We made certain provision for handling charges, for carting charges, for godown charges, for insurance, and so on. For these we did not have to incur expenditure. We had also made provision for

sending the wheat products to the mufassil. I had intended to send large quantities of wheat and flood the mufassil with wheat so that the price of rice might be kept down. I had intended to pay from Government funds all these charges for carting, storage and generally for carrying the stuff from the central store to the mufassil and selling it at six annas a seer which price I have fixed from the very beginning. We have taken into account all these costs, the loss to Government at the time of calculation, and we put down certain prices; we did not incur any extra charges on these items and so certain amount of reserve has been acquired. I made this clear to the Central Government and to the Government of the Punjab. You may call this reserve or you may call it profit, but this is the actual position. We have done this in order to stabilise the price. But when you say that the Government of Bengal is making profit, that is absolutely a misunderstanding of the situation. This reserve is going to be set apart for the purpose of stabilising the price and meeting other expenses. Then, Sir, another fact that should be taken into consideration in this connection is that we are also getting wheat from the United Provinces but at a cost higher than what we are getting from the Punjab. For all these reasons, I think, in order to stabilise the price we require a reserve: and this would explain what I have done. Then, Sir, it has been said that all along the Punjab is sending us wheat at Rs. 10 a maund, why then the price here is so much higher. I may say that Punjab used to send us wheat at Rs. 11-10 per maund and not Rs. 10 per maund. They are charging now Rs. 10-8 for the new wheat. Then there is the cost of carriage which is Rs. 1-6. This question was raised by the Government of India and by the Punjab Government. I told them that I intended to revise the wheat price on my return to Bengal and that we had to keep the price at a higher level in order to build a reserve for bringing the price of wheat coming from elsewhere in parity with the Punjab price. I also requested the Government of India and the Government of Punjab to send here a Costing Officer just to see what we have done, whether we have made any mistakes. If any profits have been made, if somebody in the middle have made anything, we do not know. We are entirely in the dark about it. The Punjab Government may know and the Government of India may possibly know about it, because the transactions were made there. Therefore, I asked the Governments of India and the Punjab to send Costing Officers who would go into our accounts and go into the whole thing and whatever advice they give I shall follow. When there is such an emergency in Bengal, when people want food, when whatever resources they have are diminishing, we ought to place these wheat products at six annas a seer in the market. That is our idea. Our present calculations are that exploring all premises—the United Provinces wheat which will be 40,000 maunds a month, and the Punjab wheat—pooling all these premises, we shall be able to supply the requirements at that rate, although ultimately the Government of Bengal will lose financially. But it does not matter if we lose. Then, Sir, these calculations may not be correct: these calculations are made by our advisers and our accountants, and according to our calculations we stand to lose and there is no question of profit. So it is not

fair for anybody to charge the Government of Bengal with profiteering and to say that the Punjab people should not send wheat to us. I want that sufficient publicity should be given to this statement——

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Why don't you talk of an enquiry?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: I am quite prepared to do that—I am quite prepared to place our accounts and papers before the Costing Officers who can go through all the figures—I am quite prepared to accept that and I am quite prepared to act according to their advice. As I have already said, I have asked the Punjab Government to send a Costing Officer here. After all, it is the Punjab which is sending the biggest quantity of wheat and they should satisfy themselves about this. I had made a promise to the Punjab Government in the Punjab itself that the price of wheat would be reduced to 6 annas, and as soon as I came down to Calcutta the prices were reduced. As regards classification of foodgrains, there was a misunderstanding. At one time I had thought that all foodgrains might be placed on the same category but on further consideration I put the wheat altogether on a different class. Account of expenditure incurred in respect of wheat transport will be a separate account altogether. I made it quite clear to the Regional Commissioner that the funds so created would be kept reserved and would not be mixed up with the funds of the Government of Bengal and that is the reason why a separate department, namely, the Wheat Controller's Department has been set up.

Now, Sir, Mr. Nimmo has asked me whether we have taken any steps to control the rice mills. That is certainly in our contemplation. We have, as the honourable members are aware, set up an expert committee to advise us and the expert committee is composed of members from the various Chambers of Commerce. It was under their advice that the *aus* crop purchase scheme was taken up with all its details and when the time comes for me to seek their advice again, I shall do so in regard to future purchases. Rice-mills should be controlled. There is no doubt about it that control of the rice-mills will give us control of the rice inasmuch as it is a bottle-neck which can easily be squeezed. This matter, Sir, is engaging our attention as also the question of the under-milling of rice. I am aware of the fact that if the rice is under-milled, it will give us a little bit more yield. As a matter of fact, two packets of under-milled rice are lying at present on my table. The under-milled rice is of two different kinds. It comes out from the *dhenki* and consequently it remains sweet. That is a matter I am looking into and with expert advice will take up the question of under-milling of rice. I am also considering whether it is not desirable to have a law to the effect that rice should be under-milled.

Turning to bribery and corruption, suggestions have been made that we should take steps to eradicate the evil. I may assure the House that I am taking, I am determined—as a matter of fact, I have promised to myself and to my conscience,—to give you a clean administration. I know that at the present moment the temptations are so great——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Suhrawardy, your time is up; only 5 minutes more are left.

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: All right, Sir, I shall be short. Only let me take this point and finish. The temptations are so great in the way of officials that it is difficult for them to surmount them. I have known of cases where monies have been flung at our officers by the trade for the purpose of obtaining undue advantages. And sometimes it becomes very difficult to get officers to stand up to the temptations which are offered by the trade. But we are determined to eradicate this evil and we shall not spare any one so far as and when it comes to our knowledge. I am not at all satisfied that it has been eradicated. The evil is still going on but when it comes to our knowledge we shall not hesitate to mete out adequate punishment to the offender. We have, as a matter of fact, removed two Assistant Deputy Directors of Civil Supplies and suspended Subdivisional Officers and shall not hesitate even to proceed against anybody irrespective of position and rank, after due and proper investigation. I shall welcome co-operation from the Opposition in this behalf. I shall welcome any reports that they may send me or give me of corruption in the department, because it is an evil which must be eradicated. I may inform the House that this is the worst legacy we have had from the previous Government. An aroma of corruption is pervading all the grades in that department. I hope we shall be able to take steps in order to get rid of this evil.

There is one other little point for me to deal with. I find this point has been raised here and elsewhere. It has been said that a sum of 15½ lakhs of rupees has been spent on the food-drive. That is not so, Sir. The mobilisation of the whole of Bengal was carried out practically at no cost to Government. This 15½ lakhs is being spent for the purpose of organising Bengal on a famine basis. I have appointed for each union one officer of the rank of Primary Licensing Assistant, and for every six unions two officers of the rank of Assistant Jute Regulation Inspector. There were not sufficient officers to cover the whole of Bengal and consequently we had to appoint more officers as a preliminary step towards organising Bengal on a famine basis. It is through them and the organisations that we have set up——.

Mr. HARIDAS MAJUMDAR: Does this sum of 15½ lakhs include travelling allowance for these officers?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: Well, these people are there within their specific jurisdiction and I do not think travelling allowance will be necessary for them. But I am not sure. Before I close, I want to say one thing—what I have already said in the other House—namely, that there are difficulties in the way and those difficulties are of transport. We have been trying our best to get transportation facilities, and we are sending foodgrains by rails, steamers, flats and boats. But there are still difficulties. You can understand that Bengal is in the war zone. Then, Sir, those who wish to throw stones at us should realise that the greatest difficulties are the difficulty of getting supply, difficulty of transport,

difficulty of distribution: all these difficulties have been created by the war. It is very easy for my honourable friends to say that the main problem is the problem of equitable distribution. I know that it is a great problem. The problem is not only confined to Calcutta: Calcutta can be rationed. I have already set up foodgrains distribution centres in Calcutta. There are people in certain areas of Calcutta who are already getting their supplies and I intend to set up 25 shops every week in order to ration Calcutta. We have based our system of rationing on a scientific system, and in this respect I am in the hands of scientists and experts. I can assure you that the rationing system here will be better than Bombay; but it will take some time. Our officers are trying their best for creating a superb organisation and in the operation of which there would be no difficulties at all. But apart from the distribution here in Calcutta which can be maintained by rationing, there is the question of distribution in the various districts and mufassil towns. Grains cannot be shifted as quickly as we desire on account of priority being given to military transport. I may inform the House that we have foodgrains but it is a question of the availability of transport. I have just received a letter from a high officer saying that he is finding great difficulties in order to get means of transportation: the grains are lying to be transported but no means are available. Then, Sir, members wanted particulars from the Government about the last drive but they do not understand what is the actual position: they do not understand anything about the difficulties which I have stated. Those persons who have undertaken this war should realise their supreme responsibility in this matter (Cries of "hear, hear"). We are trying our level best to find supplies, we are trying our level best to arrange for distribution, and I challenge anybody who can say that he could have done better or more. You say from the other side "oh! you have failed and therefore give it up and let the Government of India and others take the responsibility"! But I do not shirk my duty, I do not move from my post, because that would be an act of cowardice. So I do not propose to do it. If anybody could have done better, they should have come and assumed charge.

Point of Privilege.

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA MUKHERJI: On a point of privilege, Sir. I would refer to May's Parliamentary Practice, pages 312-13, which deals with the right of a member of this House to speak on the question of a portion of his speech which has been misunderstood by some of the honourable members of the House. Yesterday when I spoke in connection with the question of the declaration of Bengal as a famine area under the Famine Code my honourable and esteemed friend Mr. Hamidul Huq Chowdhury wanted information as to what is the authority on which I based my observation. Unfortunately, I had to cut down my speech and sit down bowing down to your ruling that my time was up. Then, Sir, I found that another speaker got up and the misunderstanding with regard to the observation which I made with regard to the effect of the declaration of Bengal as a famine area persisted. Then I wanted your ruling to speak by way of information and by way of explaining my speech to give certain

information which I could give in a minute by referring to the section of the Famine Code. Sir, you were then pleased to rule that I could pass this information on to the Hon'ble Minister. I say, Sir, with all the emphasis that I can command that when I wanted to speak on a matter of information, it was meant for the members of this House for their deliberation and for their judgment and not for the information of the Hon'ble Minister alone. Therefore, I say, Sir, that you will consider whether in giving the ruling that I should pass on the information which I wanted to give to the House explaining a portion of my speech which was misunderstood I was not deprived of the privilege which I have. Speaking again on the question, I would remind you that with regard to the question of the ruling of a President, the House is the ultimate authority so far as this matter is concerned and the matter is left entirely to the House itself and you will find that in May's Parliamentary Practice at page 338.

Now, Sir, I will request you to consider whether in giving the ruling which you did yesterday that I should pass on the information to the Hon'ble Minister personally and not speak to the House to explain the portion of my speech as to the effect of the declaration of Bengal as a famine area under the Famine Code on the provincial finances, I was not deprived of the privilege which I have by way of personal explanation.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Mukherjee, yesterday, so far as I understood, you rose on a point of information and not on a point of personal explanation. If you had thus risen to explain your speech, I would have certainly allowed you to do so; but my impression was that you wanted to supply the information to the Hon'ble Minister and I believe that was the impression generally in the House. I shall certainly look into the proceedings and find out whether I was wrong and you were correct. Now, as regards the passing of that information to the Hon'ble Minister, I understood that you wanted to supply such information to the Hon'ble Minister, and I thought that that would disturb or interrupt the honourable member who was already on his legs. You had already had more than your time. So you would not have been justified in doing what you wanted to do.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Mr. President, Sir, the time allotted to me is very short and therefore I will be very brief. At the very outset, I say that the first disservice that the Food Minister did was by the Press-Note of the 3rd May, 1943. The explanations which are now forthcoming are not at all convincing. What he now says was at the back of his mind and what was at the back of his mind did not reach outside. Now, when he takes credit that he has been successful quite recently to convince the Government of India I think that he is taking all credit for which credit is not due to him at all. He said that he repeatedly tried to convince the Government of India and he failed. He failed, Sir, because he was confronted with his own statement. Sir, the statement that was published on the 3rd May, 1943, in the *Bengal Weekly* as in all dailies said that there was no shortage in Bengal. When he made the statement that there was no shortage of foodgrains in Bengal, he should have been aware what sort of treatment would be meted out to him by the Government of India.

If the Government of India are now feeling the pangs of conscience, it is not because of the efforts of the Hon'ble Minister but because of the repeated attempts made by the Opposition both during this session and during the last session emphasising the fact that there was a serious shortage of rice in Bengal. So, the credit instead of being due to the Hon'ble Minister is really a credit due to the Opposition.

The second disservice which the Hon'ble Food Minister has done is to say that not every part of Bengal is famine-stricken. Sir, this is a time when the conscience of the whole world has been roused with regard to the food position in Bengal. If the Hon'ble Food Minister has read Reuter's telegrams that appeared today and yesterday he will know that the conscience of the whole world has been stirred by the fact that there is a terrible famine going on in Bengal; therefore, a statement like this that famine has not occurred in every part of Bengal is a distinct disservice. A Minister who can make a statement like that gives away his whole case and as a matter of fact he has no right to call upon the United Nations to come to the rescue of Bengal. I assert again that a serious famine is raging in every part of Bengal. I would ask the Food Minister one simple question: what does he mean by "every part of Bengal"? Is he not aware that in every village of Bengal there is a large class of population who is entirely dependent upon labour? There is a large section of fishermen living upon income derived from fishing and that for lack of boats due to the denial policy of the Government, their chief means of earning has been lost to them? There is also a large class of population, namely, artisans and agricultural labourers and poor middle-class *Bhadralogs* who are entirely dependent upon the sweat of their brow to earn the wherewithal to support themselves and their families. Now, Sir, when the Hon'ble Minister admits in his reply the existence of a serious situation caused by the high prices of foodgrains, and also that there is serious shortage of foodgrains, how can he say in the same breath that every part of Bengal is not affected? Does he not know that the people I have named are to be found in every village of Bengal and that they are in a serious predicament and are going almost without food? I have heard the story from the labourers themselves who say that when they were getting four annas a day they had quite sufficient to eat and wear; with that small amount they could purchase their rice and *dal* but now though they are earning as much as perhaps rupee one a day in some cases, that is not quite sufficient to fill their belly with one meal a day, not to speak of the members of their families. So I repeat that the Minister has done a great disservice in declaring today that famine does not exist in every part of Bengal but only in some parts. May I know, Sir, what is the Hon'ble Minister's notion of a famine and famine conditions? Perhaps his idea is that every one in Bengal must have to be famine-stricken before famine can be declared. Perhaps he thinks that as long as the Hon'ble Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy does not starve and so long as his supporters do not starve, there is no famine. When he declared that Government did all that it could, may I ask, Sir, what the Government have done? What the Government have done we know. Government did

something no doubt for their own servants; they paid their own servants subsidies as much as they could; they also afforded facilities for the employers, their labourers and to the mill-owners, and industrial organisations. These are the people who have benefited by the subsidies provided by Government. But these are not definitely the people in respct of whom we say that a famine exists. Outside this class of people there are vast millions of people who are affected not only by the high prices but by scarcity of foodgrains. Deaths from starvation have revealed the real state of things even in Calcutta. You do not know the fact that from the interior of all the districts people in large numbers are leaving their hearths and homes and actually begging in towns and cities? I am surprised to find the Hon'ble Minister saying that not every part in Bengal is famine-stricken. Then, Sir, besides the Press-Note of the Hon'ble Mr. Suhrawardy which has done a distinct disservice to the province, the price-control order of the Hon'ble Minister is another disservice done to the masses. If control of price is exercised, it is necessary that it should be for all. At the same time, I do say that the Government which enforces price-control must be in possession of sufficient supplies of foodgrains, so that when trade goes out of the market, when trade hides its head, Government may pin its responsibility on to the people and meet the demand. Where Government fails to do so, it is guilty of dereliction of duty. So this Government has clearly done a great disservice to the people. As I understood the price-control order, it has produced the effect of rice disappearing from the markets of Bengal and you have to get it only at a very high price in the black market. In defence of the price-control order the Hon'ble Minister made an appeal to us to go out in the mufassil and persuade the agriculturists and others to come out with their foodgrains. Well, Sir, I tell him in his face that no persuasion will do and there is no doubt about the fact that there is a serious shortage of rice in the Province. You yourself have made a food-drive and food census and you know that there are no hoards amongst the agriculturists, that most of the districts have declared themselves deficit. After making that declaration and saying that the districts are deficit, you turn round now and say go to the mufassil and persuade the people to come out with the hoards. It is a difficult logic to understand. We tried our best——(interruptions from the Government Benches). Do not interrupt me. We have tried our best to persuade the agriculturists to bring out their hoards, if any, and place them before the market. We think that they did so wherever they could. But now they have not got anything, where will they get hoards? You are the Secretary of the Muslim League which you claim represents cent. per cent. Muslims of Bengal. You also pretend to lead the Muslim population of Bengal. If your claim is not a mere pretence, I tell you in your face, why don't you go yourself to the agriculturists and persuade them to come out with what foodgrains they have got? 90 per cent. of the agriculturists are Muslims. If you have any influence with them, why don't you go and ask them to come out with their hoards in order to ease the situation? But you have no point. You can meet the point, if really your point is true.

Then, Sir, criticisms have been made about propaganda. Yes, we have made propaganda and criticisms of all your actions and the results have been beneficial not only to you but to all the people of the province. The conscience of the world has been stirred as never before. With regard to the wheat from the Punjab—why a Costing Officer should be sent down from the Punjab—why you are anxious to avoid a public enquiry? Why not have a public enquiry or a tribunal to go into the matter? A public enquiry can satisfy every one. Many complaints have been made against the appointments made in your department, about the selection of contractors, agents, such as Messrs. Ispahani & Co. These matters can be satisfactorily gone into by a public enquiry. Why avoid an open enquiry go in for a Costing Officer?

Lastly, Sir, I would also refer to the matter of Mr. N. M. Khan, I.C.S. Sir, the Hon'ble Minister gives a certificate to Mr. N. M. Khan saying that he was an excellent officer with drive and imagination, but on our part we say that he is not at all like that. We know his doings at Brahmanbaria where damage suits were brought against him and decreed; we know also how he escaped from payment of compensation on appeal to the High Court on technical grounds. We know his activities in Midnapore, his connivance of the atrocities and misdeeds prepetrated there. We know also what pranks he played in Jessore before coming to Midnapore; the less said about him the better. Sir, I do not intend to take up the time of the House further and I will close by making the suggestion that Government should at once declare famine in Bengal and should take the responsibility of feeding the destitutes. I know, Sir, that the provincial revenues may not be sufficient to meet the situation; but, Sir, now that the conscience of the world has been aroused, supplies will flow from all parts of the world; and I think that if famine is declared, the situation of Bengal will be eased in no time.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Will the Hon'ble Minister reply?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: No, Sir, I do not intend to do that.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. The question before the House is: that this Council is of opinion that the statement of the Hon'ble Minister in charge of Civil Supplies on the policy pursued by the Ministry with regard to the food situation in Bengal is extremely disappointing and unsatisfactory, that its latest action in promulgating the Price Control Order without making suitable provision for supplies of rice and other foodgrains has intensified the crisis, that it failed to adopt adequate measures to discharge the elementary responsibility of saving human lives from deaths due to starvation and has so far failed also to introduce Rationing. This Council is further of opinion that the Government should declare Bengal a *Famine Area* and take upon itself the responsibility of feeding the destitute.

To which the following amendment has been moved:

That after the word "destitute" occurring at the end of the motion, the following be added, namely:—

"This Council is further of opinion that—

(*i*) immediate steps should be taken to isolate the big consuming areas like Calcutta and Howrah including their industrial suburbs, Chittagong, Dacca, Narayanganj, all places of military concentration and construction and big evacuees' camps, from the rest of Bengal, with a view to maintain the supplies in such areas with the imports from outside and to retain the supplies in rural Bengal for the relief of the poor masses and middle classes as far as practicable, supplementing the same with surplus of the foodgrains from outside Bengal to relieve specially deficit areas.

(*ii*) immediate steps should be taken to prevent the purchase of *aus* paddy and rice as also the coming *aman* crop by big traders from outside, whether Government Agents or others, at competetive prices, and to prohibit the export of such foodgrains to the bigger consuming centres isolated as above;

(*iii*) immediate steps should be taken to secure cent. per cent. control over supply, prices and distribution of foodgrains available from whatever source, to be carried on by agency enjoying 100 per cent. confidence of the people;"

Mr. PRESIDENT: I will first put the amendment to the vote of the House.

(The amendment was negatived.)

Mr. PRESIDENT: Now I will put the original motion.

The following motion of Mr. Lalit Chandra Das was then put:—

That this Council is of opinion that the statement of the Hon'ble Minister in charge of Civil Supplies on the policy pursued by the Ministry with regard to the food situation in Bengal is extremely disappointing and unsatisfactory, that its latest action in promulgating the Price Control Order without making suitable provision for supplies of rice and other foodgrains has intensified the crisis, that it failed to adopt adequate measures to discharge the elementary responsibility of saving human lives from deaths due to starvation and has so far failed also to introduce Rationing. This Council is further of opinion that the Government should declare Bengal a *Famine Area* and take upon itself the responsibility of feeding the destitute.

A division was then challenged and taken with the following result:—

AYES—12.

Mr. Altaf Ali
Mr. S. C. Chakraverti
Mr. L. C. Das
Mr. B. C. Datta
Mr. N. C. Datta
Mr. Humayun Kabir
Rai Bahadur B. M. Maitra
Mr. H. D. Mojumdar
Mr. N. N. Mohalanabish
Mr. B. C. Mukherji
Mr. R. Pal Choudhuri
Mr. A. D. Roy

NOES—28.

Khan Sahib Fariduddin Ahmed
Mr. Mesbahuddin Ahmed
Mr. Nur Ahmed
Mr. Sultanuddin Ahmed
Khan Sahib Nurul Amin
Khan Sahib Abdul Aziz
Mr. D. L. Barua
Mr. Moazzemali Chowdhury
Mr. Hamidul Huq Chowdhury
Khan Bahadur Abdul Hamid Chowdhury
Mr. C. E. Clarke
Mr. D. J. Cohen
Mrs. K D.'Rozario
Mrs. L. P. Dutt
Mr. R. W. N. Ferguson
Khan Bahadur Abdul Gofran
The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Saiyed Muazzamuddin Hosain.
Mr. Latafat Hossain
Mr. W. B. G. Laidlaw
Mr. Abdul Latiff
Mr. J. McFarlane
Khan Sahib Subid Ali Molla
Khan Bahadur M. A. Momin
Mr. T. B. Nimmo
Khan Sahib Abul Quasem
Rai Bahadur R. B. Roy
Mr. Yakub H. S. Sattar
Khan Bahadur M. Shamsuzzoha

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. The House has divided. For the motion—12; against the motion—28. The motion is, therefore, negatived.

NON-OFFICIAL BILLS.

Mr. PRESIDENT: We shall now take up the non-official Bills.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Sir, before you take up the non-official Bills, may I make one submission? There are some Bills for introduction only, which will only take five minutes. May I request you to take them up first?

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am afraid that cannot be done under the rules. The Bills already under discussion must be taken up first, Mr. Nur Ahmed.

The Bengal Public Gambling (Amendment) Bill, 1940.

Mr. NUR AHMED: I beg to move that the Bengal Public Gambling (Amendment) Bill, 1940, as reported by the Select Committee, be taken into consideration.

Sir, I have explained the purpose of this amending Bill to this House on more than one occasion. This Bill was referred to a Select Committee by a motion of this House in 1941. After a good deal of time had been spent, it has at last come up before this House with the report of the Select Committee. Gambling is a thing which is doing incalculable harm to the society. It increases the misery of the people especially the poor people. The original Act was passed so long ago as 1867. Since then the world has undergone great changes and Bengal has undergone a startling change. Here human ingenuity has discovered new forms of gambling which were not contemplated at the time when the original Bill was passed. The Select Committee was unanimous. It made several modifications—some clauses were omitted and some were changed. The main provision of the Bill is to amend the definition of the term "gambling." It is a known fact that in carnivals and other shows various new forms of gambling are carried on to the utter ruin of the poor people who fall prey to temptations. In this amending Bill, a clause has been added to make these sorts of gambling punishable. Provision has been made to extend it to some places. There is a great deal of demand for the

extension of the provision of the Act to the whole of Bengal with the exception of Calcutta. Sir, the definition of the instruments has been made up-to-date and the newest phase of gambling has been included in it, and also the punishment has been made more stringent. Sir, I hope the House will support this Bill. With these words, I move my motion for consideration.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Motion moved:

That the Bengal Public Gambling (Amendment) Bill, 1940, as reported by the Select Committee, be taken into consideration.

(The motion was agreed to.)

Mr. NUR AHMED: Sir, I beg to move that the Bengal Public Gambling (Amendment) Bill, 1940, as settled in the Council, be passed.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. Mr. Nur Ahmed, I must put the clause first. The question before the House is: that clause 1 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: On a point of order, Sir. I submit that clauses cannot be taken up today, for time must be given to us to put in amendments.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Bill was referred to a Select Committee, and it has come out of the Select Committee already: so no other motion can be moved.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: No, Sir, I do not want to put in any such amendment. There are one or two points which might require amendment.

Mr. NUR AHMED: May I submit, Sir, that this motion for consideration and passing was duly circulated and no amendment was tabled. I gave due notice of motion for consideration as well as of passing.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Sir, we do not want to oppose the consideration of the Bill; but we might have given notices of some amendments, if we had time. In view of this, Sir, I submit that this Bill cannot be taken up, clause by clause, today.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. As there is objection to the Bill being taken up, clause by clause, today, I am afraid the Chair cannot take up the Bill at the present moment. As time for putting in amendments will have to be given, the Bill cannot be taken up this session at all.

The Bengal Advocates' Robes Bill, 1941.

Rai Bahadur BROJENDRA MOHAN MAITRA: Sir, I beg to move that the Advocates' Robes Bill, 1941, be taken into consideration.

In doing so, I have not much to add to what I submitted to the House on the 25th September, 1942, when the Bill was first discussed. The whole idea is uniformity of robes amongst Advocates of the High Court however recruited. All that I want is that all Advocates of the Calcutta

High Court should wear one specific robe. My Bill aims at carrying out the recommendations of the Indian Bar Committee and furthering the object for which the Indian Bar Councils Act was passed. It will be simply unfortunate if there is no one uniform and specific robe for an Advocate of the Calcutta High Court.

At present, as I have set out in my Objects and Reasons, there are three kinds of robes worn. The Advocates' robe which is the general robe for all Advocates, the Barristers' robe and the Vakils' Blue gown. What I want to do away with is the Barristers' robe and the Vakils' blue gown. And I want it because leaving out the Attorneys with whom the present Bill has no concern, every one, be he a Barrister or anything else, practises in the Calcutta High Court only as an Advocate and as nothing else. I will read out to the House clause (*1*) of section 8 of the Indian Bar Councils Act XXXVIII of 1926 which is in these terms:—

"No person shall be entitled as of right to practise in any High Court unless his name is entered in the roll of the Advocates of the High Court maintained under this Act:

Provided that nothing in this sub-section shall apply to any Attorney of the High Court".

The House knows that the Indian Bar Councils Act of 1926 was passed to carry out the recommendations of the Indian Bar Committee of 1924 which reported among other things that in all High Courts a single grade of practitioners entitled to plead should be enrolled to be called Advocates (not Barristers) the grade of High Court Vakils and Pleaders being abolished, etc.

I have seen the opinion of the Calcutta Bar Library Club but with utmost respect to that learned body I do not see that it really touches the basic point. It is more or less vituperative and lacks in sound argument. They say that the Bill is intended to deprive them of their gown. Not at all; there is no question of depriving anybody of anything. What I want is uniformity amongst all advocates. If by such uniformity any kind of robe now in vogue is taken away, the situation cannot be helped. I have no quarrel with the Barrister or the non-Barrister. The difficulty is that Barristers or non-barristers—all practise according to law—I mean the Bar Councils Act—only as Advocates. After recruitment in the High Court the distinction is swept away. After enrolment as Advocate there is no Barrister (by which would I mean a member of the English Bar qualified in the Inns of Court) and there is no vakil in the eye of the High Court. Call to Bar in England is only a qualification for admission into the roll of the Advocates of the High Court just as much as a B.L. degree of an Indian University. There being thus one and only one single grade of practitioners, there should appropriately be only one single uniform robe. My respectful answer to the Calcutta Bar Library Club is that if they do not feel shy in practising under the denomination of an Advocate, I wonder why they should feel shy in wearing the Advocates' robe. If they can take the name, what objection can they possibly have to take the robe? It

is said that Barristers had been wearing their robes since time immemorial, but it is forgotten that before 1926, it was principally the Barristers who used to be enrolled under the Letters Patent as Advocates of the High Court. There was no idea, until the Indian Bar Councils Act came into operation, of one unified Indian Bar in whatever manner recruited and it is this Act, viz., the Bar Councils Act that made it law by section 8(*1*) quoted above that in the High Court there will be only one roll of Advocates, the denomination of vakils and pleaders being abolished. As the Barristers had been practising not as Barristers but as Advocates, there was no question of the abolition of the denomination of Barristers. It is also suggested that as it is a domestic matter it should be dealt with by the High Court; but I have already given my answer to this suggestion in my Statement of Objects and Reasons. The High Court has failed to do what was required of it, They have prescribed and Advocate's robe without making it compulsory. I do not really see the point in maintaining the Barristers' robe and the Vakils' gown, when there are no such practitioners as Barristers or Vakils. The rules are, therefore, anomalous and display a weakness on the part of that august body.

In my speech introducing the Bill, I made it clear that I have no fascination for the Barristers' gown. I do not want the Barristers' gown. I want an Advocates robe, let that robe be whatever it may be in the discretion of the High Court: whether it be the Barristers' gown as in the Federal Court, which is the robe for all practitioners. Barristers or non-barristers or whether it be the present Advocates gown or the Vakils blue gown or any other gown. I do not mind even simple *dhuti, panjabi* and *chadar,* provided it is uniform.

There may be an impression that as the Barristers gown has been granted by the Inns of Court of England or Ireland, that cannot be taken away or interfered with by any other body. That is an idle argument. It is an academic robe. Let the Barristers wear their own gown as much as they like outside the court; but when the Barristers come to practise the profession of an Advocate, they have to wear the distinctive robe of an Advocate. I have already told the House that Barristers do not practise in India as Barristers but as Advocates. A B.L. or M.L. or D.L. of the Calcutta University has his own distinctive robes but he cannot wear such robes when he comes to practise as an Advocate of the Calcutta High Court. There is, therefore, no point in suggesting that this Bill intends to take away the Barristers gown or to copy it for all Advocates. It has also been said that the Bill is not for the benefit of the people. I respectfully differ. People are interested because an Indian Bar is of national importance and it is from this nationalistic notion of an Indian Bar that the Bar Councils Act was passed. The present Bill is also intended for the same purpose, viz., the unification of the Indian Bar. It is a question of the Indian prestige, dignity and self-respect.

After the Bar Councils Act, there is no English Bar. There is only the Indian Bar and there is no reason why a robe peculiar to the English Bar should continue. I may also mention that the High Court Judges whether

recruited from the Indian Civil Service or from the British Advocates or Vakil Advocates, they all wear the same robes.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Motion moved: that the Bengal Advocates' Robes Bill, 1941, be taken into consideration.

Mr. MESBAHUDDIN AHMED: Sir, I beg to move that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee consisting of—

(1) The Hon'ble Nawab Musharruff Hossain, Khan Bahadur, Minister in charge of Judicial Department,
(2) Rai Bahadur Brojendra Mohan Maitra,
(3) Mr. Bankim Chandra Datta,
(4) Mr. Bankim Chandra Mukherjee,
(5) Mr. W. B. G. Laidlaw,
(6) Maulvi Khorshed Alam Chowdhury,
(7) Mr. Hamidul Huq Chowdhury,
(8) Mr. Nur Ahmed,
(9) Khan Sahib Abul Quasem,
(10) Khan Sahib Nurul Amin, and
(11) Mr. Dhirendra Lal Barua,

with instructions to submit their report by the 31st December, 1943, and that the number of members whose presence shall be necessary to constitute a quorum shall be four.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Have you obtained the consent of the members you have suggested for the Select Committee?

Mr. MESBAHUDDIN AHMED: Yes, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The question before the House is: that Bengal Advocates' Robes Bill, 1941, be taken into consideration, to which an amendment has been moved that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee consisting of—

(1) The Hon'ble Nawab Musharruff Hossain, Khan Bahadur, Minister in charge of Judicial Department,
(2) Rai Bahadur Brojendra Mohon Maitra,
(3) Mr. Bankim Chandra Datta,
(4) Mr. Bankim Chandra Mukherjee,
(5) Mr. W. B. G. Laidlaw,
(6) Maulvi Khorshed Alam Chowdhury,
(7) Mr. Hamidul Huq Chowdhury,
(8) Mr. Nur Ahmed,
(9) Khan Sahib Abul Quasem,
(10) Khan Sahib Nurul Amin, and
(11) Mr. Dhirendra Lal Barua,

with instructions to submit their report by the 31st December, 1943, and that the number of members whose presence shall be necessary to constitute a quorum shall be four.

(The motion was agreed to.)

Mr. NUR AHMED: Sir, I shall not move the motions relating to reference of my Bills to select committees. I shall only move motions for circulation and introduction.

Mr. PRESIDENT: All right.

The Bengal Suppression of Immoral Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 1940.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Sir, I beg to move that the Bengal Suppression of Immoral Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 1940, be circlulated for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon by the 30th January, 1944.

As the Bill is going to be circulated, the honourable members will be in a position to know the provisions of the Bill; and so I do not wish to take up the time of the House by any speech.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Motion moved:

That the Bengal Suppression of Immoral Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 1940, be circulated for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon by the 30th Janaury, 1944.

(The motion was agreed to.)

The Bengal Probation of First Offenders Bill, 1942.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Sir, I beg to move that the Bengal Probation of First Offenders Bill, 1942, be circulated for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon by the 31st March, 1944.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Motion moved:

That the Bengal Probation of First Offenders Bill, 1942, be circulated for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon by the 31st March, 1944.

(The motion was agreed to.)

The Bengal Indecent Advertisement Prevention Bill, 1942.

Mr. NUR AHMED: I beg to move that the Bill be circulated for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon by the 31st January, 1944.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Motion moved:

That the Bengal Indecent Advertisement Prevention Bill, 1942, be circulated for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon by the 31st January, 1944.

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHOLANOBISH: I rise on a point of order, Sir. We have not got copies of this Bill. I think that under the rules before any motion for the consideration of a Bill or for reference of a Bill to a select committee or any other motion can be moved, copies of the Bill should be supplied to members of the House. I would refer you to the proviso to rule 56 of the Bengal Legislative Council Procedure Rules.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Are you quite sure that you have not got a copy of this Bill? When the Bill was introduced, copies must have been circulated to all the members.

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHOLANOBISH: But there are some who have become members of this House after this Bill was introduced; and I am one of them.

Mr. NUR AHMED: May I submit that when the Bill was introduced, it was published in the *Calcutta Gazette* and copies of the *Calcutta Gazette* are sent to every member of the House?

Mr. PRESIDENT: But they were not members of this House at the time and so they did not receive any copy of the *Calcutta Gazette*.

Mr. MESBAHUDDIN AHMED: In that case, no such motion can be moved.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Will then similar objection apply to all such Bills of mine?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Yes, certainly.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Then I do not move my Bills of this nature.

The Bengal Famine Insurance Fund (Amendment) Bill, 1943.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Sir, I beg to move for leave to introduce the Bengal Famine Insurance Fund (Amendment) Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The question before the House is: that leave be given to Mr. Nur Ahmed to introduce the Bengal Famine Insurance Fund (Amendment) Bill, 1943.

(The motion was agreed to.)

The Secretary then read the title of the Bill.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Bill is introduced.

The Hindu Women's Rights to Property (Extension to Agricultural Land) Bill, 1943.

Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHOLANOBISH: Sir, I beg to move for leave to introduce the Hindu Women's Rights to Property (Extension to Agricultural Land) Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The question before the House is: that leave be granted to Mr. Nagendra Nath Moholanobish to introduce the Hindu Women's Rights to Property (Extension of Agricultural Land) Bill, 1943.

(The motion was agreed to.)

The Secretary then read the title of the Bill.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Bill is introduced.

Mr. MESBAHUDDIN AHMAD: Is it necessary that copies of the Bill should be circulated.

Mr. PRESIDENT: After the Bill is introduced, copies are to be circulated.

The Bengal Local Self-Government (Amendment) Bill, 1943.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: I beg to move for leave to introduce the Bengal Local Self-Government (Amendment) Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The question before the House is: that leave be granted to Mr. Humayun Kabir to introduce the Bengal Local Self-Government (Amendment) Bill, 1943.

(The motion was agreed to.)

SECRETARY: The Bengal Local Self-Government (Amendment) Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Bengal Local Self-Government (Amendment) Bill, 1943, is introduced.

The Bengal Children (Amendment) Bill, 1943.

Mr. NUR AHMED: I beg to move for leave to introduce the Bengal Children (Amendment) Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The question before the House is: that leave be granted to Mr. Nur Ahmed to introduce the Bengal Children (Amendment) Bill, 1943.

(The motion was agreed to.)

SECRETARY: The Bengal Children (Amendment) Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Bengal Children (Amendment) Bill, 1943, is introduced.

The Bengal Criminal Procedure (Election Offences) Amendment Bill, 1943.

Mr. NUR AHMED: I beg to move for leave to introduce the Bengal Criminal Procedure (Election Offences) Amendment Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The question before the House is: that leave be granted to Mr. Nur Ahmed to introduce the Bengal Criminal Procedure (Election Offences) Amendment Bill, 1943.

(The motion was agreed to.)

SECRETARY: The Bengal Criminal Procedure (Election Offences) Amendment Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Bengal Criminal Procedure (Election Offences) Amendment Bill, 1943, is introduced.

The Bengal Holy Quoran Sale Bill, 1943.

Mr. NUR AHMED: I beg to move for leave to introduce the Bengal Holy Quoran Sale Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The question before the House is: that leave be granted to Mr. Nur Ahmed to introduce the Bengal Holy Quoran Sale Bill, 1943.

(The motion was agreed to.)

SECRETARY: The Bengal Holy Quoran Sale Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Bengal Holy Quoran Sale Bill, 1943, is introduced.

The Bengal Music in the Muslim Shrine Prohibition Bill, 1943.

Mr. NUR AHMED: I beg to move for leave to introduce the Bengal Music in the Muslim Shrine Prohibition Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The question before the House is: that leave be granted to Mr. Nur Ahmed to introduce the Bengal Music in the Muslim Shrine Prohibition Bill, 1943.

(The motion was agreed to.)

SECRETARY: The Bengal Music in the Muslim Shrine Prohibited Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Bengal Music in the Muslim Shrine Prohibition Bill, 1943, is introduced.

The Indian Lunacy (Bengal Amendment) Bill, 1943.

Mr. NUR AHMED: I beg to move for leave to introduce the Indian Lunacy (Bengal Amendment) Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The question before the House is: that leave be granted to Mr. Nur Ahmed to introduce the Indian Lunacy (Bengal Amendment) Bill, 1943.

(The motion was agreed to.)

SECRETARY: The Indian Lunacy (Bengal Amendment) Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Indian Lunacy (Bengal Amendment) Bill, 1943, is introduced.

The Bengal Melas Regulation Bill, 1943.

Mr. NUR AHMED: I beg to move for leave to introduce the Bengal Melas Regulation Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The question before the House is: that leave be granted to Mr. Nur Ahmed to introduce the Bengal Melas Regulation Bill, 1943.

(The motion was agreed to.)

SECRETARY: The Bengal Melas Regulation Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Bengal Melas Regulation Bill, 1943, is introduced.

The Land Acquisition (Bengal Amendment) Bill, 1943.

Mr. NUR AHMED: I beg to move for leave to introduce the Land Acquisition (Bengal Amendment) Bill, 1943.

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: On a point of order, Sir. May I have a ruling from you as to whether this Bill can be moved in view of the fact that this Bill will involve financial obligation on the part of the Government?

Mr. PRESIDENT: That is a question of interpretation of the law. I would allow the introduction of this Bill and then you may have it interpreted properly in a court of law.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Sir, I beg to move for leave to introduce the Land Acquisition (Bengal Amendment) Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The question before the House is: that leave be granted to Mr. Nur Ahmed to introduce the Land Acquisition (Bengal Amendment) Bill, 1943.

(The motion was agreed to.)

SECRETARY: The Land Acquisition (Bengal Amendment) Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Land Acquisition (Bengal Amendment) Bill, 1943, is introduced.

The Indian Registration (Bengal Amendment) Bill, 1943.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Sir, I beg to move for leave to introduce the Indian Registration (Bengal Amendment) Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The question before the House is: that leave be granted to Mr. Nur Ahmed to introduce the Indian Registration (Bengal Amendment) Bill, 1943.

(The motion was agreed to.)

SECRETARY: The Indian Registration (Bengal Amendment) Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Indian Registration (Bengal Amendment) Bill, 1943, is introduced.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Nur Ahmed, your next Bill regarding the Transfer of Property and the Indian Registration (Bengal Amendment) Bill, 1943, you cannot move, because previous sanction is not obtained.

Mr. NUR AHMED: But what about the Bengal Medical (Amendment) Bill, 1943, Sir?

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Bengal Medical (Amendment) Bill, 1943, too you cannot move for previous sanction has not yet been obtained.

The House stands adjourned till 9 a.m. on Monday, the 27th September.

Adjournment.

The Council then adjourned till 9 a.m. on Monday, the 27th September, 1943.

Members absent.

The following members were absent from the meeting held on the 24th September, 1943:—

(1)) Khan Bahadur Naziruddin Ahmad.
(2) Mr. Hamidul Huq Chowdhury.
(3) Mr. Kamini Kumar Dutta.
(4) Mr. Mohamed Hossain.
(5) Mr. Mungturam Jaipuria.
(6) Mr. Humayun Kabir.
(7) Maulana Muhammad Akram Khan.
(8) Mr. Naresh Nath Mookerjee.
(9) Mr. R. S. Purssell.
(10) Khan Bahadur Kazi Abdur Rashid.
(11) Dr. Kumud Sankar Ray.
(12) Mr. Birendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury.
(13) Dr. Kasiruddin Talukdar.

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BENGAL LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DEBATES

Third Session, 1943—No. 8.

THE COUNCIL met in the Legislative Chamber of the Legislative Building, Calcutta, on Monday, the 27th September, 1943, at 9 am., being the eighth day of the Third Session of 1943, pursuant to section 62 (2) (*a*) of the Government of India Act, 1935.

Mr. President (the Hon'ble Sir BIJOY PRASAD SINGH ROY, K.C.I.E.) was in the Chair.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Health of University students.

3. Mr. NUR AHMED: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Education Department be pleased to state if it is a fact that the health of the University students and of the pupils of the high schools is rapidly deteriorating year after year?

(*b*) Is it a fact that the latest reports of the Students' Welfare Committee of the University of Calcutta shows that the percentage of students suffering from diseases and defects have increased in 1941-42 as compared to that of 1939?

(*c*) If so, what measures, if any, have been taken by the Government to prevent this deterioration in the health of the students and to remove the defects and diseases?

MINISTER in charge of the EDUCATION DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Mr. Tamizuddin Khan): (*a*) No.

(*b*) Yes. The rise in the incidence of diseases requiring immediate attention is mainly due to the increase in the number of students found to be suffering from enlarged tonsils and congested throat. (*Vide* p. 2, Report of the Students' Welfare Committee, 1941-42.)

The activities of the Students' Welfare Committee of the Calcutta University are mainly confined to Calcutta.

(*c*) Under the Youth Welfare Scheme trained teachers for Physical Education for high, middle and primary schools have been supplied, grants have been given for free supply of tiffin to poor students in high schools and grants have been given to schools for the purchase of apparatus, improvement of playgrounds or gymnasium, etc.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if there is standing medical board to look into the welfare of students, particularly in reference to diseases of the throat which are prevalent in Calcutta?

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN: There is no medical board.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Do the Government propose to consider the advisability of forming a board like that in the near future?

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN: There are arrangements for treating this disease but whether it will be necessary to have a board for that purpose, that is a consideration which I shall look into it.

Small-scale industries.

37. Mr. NUR AHMED: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Commerce, Labour and Industries Department be pleased to state what cottage and small-scale industries have been specially developed in Bengal during the present war period in order to meet the demands of the goods imported from Japan, Germany, Italy, Austria and other hostile countries?

(*b*) What is the annual production of articles from each of these industries and what is the annual value of the production of each?

(*c*) What special facilities and assistance have been given by the Government of Bengal to encourage and help the workers of these cottage and small-scale industries in Bengal?

(*d*) How much money has been advanced as loan and contribution under the provisions of the Bengal State Aid to Industries Act in the years 1938-39, 1939-40, 1940-41, 1941-42 and 1942-43, respectively, and to whom such loans and contributions have been given during these years?

Mr. BIREN ROY (on behalf of the Hon'ble Mr. Khwaja Shahabuddin): (*a*) As a result of the war situation and the efforts of the Department of Industries in a direct or indirect manner *sola* hat-making, hemp net-making, manufacture of woollen blankets, silk industry, hosiery industry, cutlery industry and horn industry have received a considerable stimulus.

(*b*) Since no complete survey of the industries has been made, the required data are not available.

(*c*) The Department of Industries assisted a number of cottage and small industries by securing to them the patronage of Government of India in the shape of orders for their products by financial loans in some cases, and also by organising production in a few cases.

(*d*) Statement is laid in the Library Table.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: With reference to part (*a*) of the question, will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state whether he has made any investigation into the department as to how far the industries mentioned therein have made progress in regard to increase of capital or output?

Mr. BIREN ROY: It has already been stated in reply to (*b*) that "Since no complete survey of the industries has been made, the required data are not available".

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Is the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the department aware that industry of *sola* hat-making, hemp net-making, manufacture of woollen blankets, silk industry, hosiery industry, etc., has

been allowed to be centralised in the hands of the big capitalists leaving no opportunity for small investors?

Mr. BIREN ROY: That is not a fact.

Officers of the Education Department.

38. Mr. NUR AHMED (on behalf of Dr. Kasiruddin Talukdar): (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Education Department be pleased to state what is the total number of officers and of the members of the other staff in the Education Department? Out of them, how many are Moslems and how many are non-Moslems?

(*b*) What is the total number of professors, lecturers and other staff in the—

(*i*) Government Colleges;

(*ii*) Government Collegiate High Schools; and

(*iii*) Government Professional Colleges and Schools, including Government Commercial School and other similar institutions, respectively?

(*c*) Out of them, how many are Moslems and how many are non-Moslems?

(*d*) What were the percentages of Moslems and non-Moslems, respectively, in these services on the 30th November, 1942?

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN: A statement furnishing the required particulars is laid on the Table.

Statement of information referred to in reply to question No. 38.

(*a*) (*i*) Total number of posts in the Education Department on the 30th November, 1942 ... 2,469

(*ii*) Total number of Moslems ... 1,069

(*iii*) Total number of non-Moslems ... 1,400

(*b*), (*c*) and (*d*) (*i*) Total number of Professors, Lecturers and other staff in Government Colleges ... 456

Number of Moslems—159.

Number of non-Moslems—297.

Percentage of Moslems—34·87.

Percentage of non-Moslems—65·13.

(*ii*) Total number of teachers and other staff in Government Collegiate High Schools and Normal Schools on the 30th November, 1942 ... 831

Number of Moslems—302.

Number of non-Moslems—529.

Percentage of Moslems—36·34.

Percentage of non-Moslems—63·66.

(*iii*) Total number of Professors, Lecturers and other staff in Government Professional Colleges including Government Commercial School and other similar institutions on the 30th November, 1942 ... 536

Number of Moslems—256.

Number of non-Moslems—280.

Percentage of Moslems—47:76.

Percentage of non-Moslems—52:24.

(*N.B.*—The figures do not include temporary and part-time officers and menials.)

Bankura District Relief Committee.

39. Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA MUKHARJI: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Revenue Department be pleased to state whether he is aware of a meeting of the Bankura District Relief Committee consisting of officials and non-officials held on the 21st May, 1943, at Bankura Edward Memorial Hall to consider the question of declaring Bankura to be a famine area?

(*b*) If the answer to part (*a*) be in the affirmative, will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state what resolution was passed?

(*c*) Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if any action has been taken by the Government on the resolution, and if so, what action has been taken thereon? If not, why not?

(*d*) Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if he is aware that one Chandi Bagdiny, mother of Bakhahari Bagdi, of village Lodna, police-station Onda, district Bankura, died of starvation in the early part of June, 1943?

MINISTER in charge of the REVENUE DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Mr. Tarak Nath Mukerjea): (*a*) Yes.

(*b*) A copy of the resolution is placed on the Table.

(*c*) Sectional distress of a serious nature prevails in the district and to meet the situation, the following relief measures have been sanctioned:—

		Rs.
(*i*) Agricultural Loans	...	6,00,000
(*ii*) Gratuitous relief	...	1,60,000
(*iii*) Test works	...	2,00,000

In view of the relief measures that were taken the question of declaring the district as a famine area did not arise.

(*d*) An old woman named Chandravali Bagdiny is reported to have died on the 11th June, 1943, at the age of about seventy-five years of apoplexy and blood pressure as the result of a fall.

Statement referred to in reply to question No. 39.

THE MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE BANKURA DISTRICT RELIEF COMMITTEE RECORDED AT THEIR MEETING HELD ON THE 22ND MAY, 1943, AT 6 P.M., AT THE EDWARD MEMORIAL HALL.

The following members were present:—

1. District Magistrate, Bankura—*President*, on the Chair.
2. Dr. R. Banerjee, Secretary, District Relief Committee.
3. The Subdivisional Officer, Bankura.
4. The Subdivisional Officer, Vishnupur.
5. The District Engineer, Bankura.
6. The District Health Officer, Bankura.
7. Rai Sahib Ramrabi Mukherjee.
8. Sj. Sarat Kumar Bose.
9. The Manager, Darbhanga Raj.
10. Swami Parameswarananda.
11. Sj. Sasanka Sekhar Banerjee.
12. Sj. Manindra Bhusan Sinha.
13. Chairman, Bankura Municipality.
14. Sj. Chandratan Rathi.
15. Sj. Banarashilall Mudi.
16. Sj. Probodh Chandra Roy.
17. The District Inspector of Schools, Bankura.
18. Sj. Fulchand Rout.
19. Sj. Probodh Chandra Dutta.
20. Sj. Naba Kumar Sen.
21. Rai Sahib Rajendra Chandra Banerjee.
22. Rai Sahib Banku Behari Dutta.
23. Sj. Hiralal Mitra.
24. Sj. Hem Chandra Dalal.
25. Sj. Ramnalini Chakraborty.
26. Munshi Abdul Karim Mandal.
27. The Sub-Manager, Burdwan Raj.
28. Sj. Rakhahari Banerjee.
29. Sj. Narendra Nath Bose.
30. Sj. Mrinal Kanti Mukherjee.
31. Sj. Gopal Chandra Nandi.
32. Sj. Samarendra Nath Banerjee.
33. Sj. Gosta Behari Mitra.
34. Maulvi Ubedar Rahim.

1. Resolved that the minutes of the proceedings of the last public meeting held on the 3rd May, 1943, be confirmed.

Babu Probodh Chandra Roy proposed that an Executive Committee should be formed at the next meeting and the scope of work of that executive committee should also be defined.

Rai Sahib R. C. Banerjee explained the necessity of forming an Executive Committee.

Sj. M. B. Sinha explained in detail the method of work done in connection with the previous distress by the District Relief Committee.

President explained the work to be done by the District Relief Committee.

Secretary then read out his report with the details of work done in connection with re-excavation of tanks and test relief works on roads and it was adopted (the report of Secretary enclosed).

Sj. M. B. Sinha moved the following resolution which was seconded by Sj. Probodh Chandra Roy.

"In view of the fact that the local and widespread failure of rice crop attended by extreme dearness and scarcity of food grain, has created in Bankura which is solely one crop, district conditions which are as bad as, if not worse than, those envisaged in the Famine Code and further in view of the fact that the situation has in the course of the last one month or more developed into a critically dangerous degree, be it resolved.

That the Government be urged to declare famine in the district and to authorise the Collector to supply freely and liberally the provisions of the Famine Code to deal effectively with the relief problem and thereby to avert starvation and deaths.

That, to proceed with, as it is not possible in view of the enormities and uncertainties of the situation to make at this stage any definite forecast of the financial requirements involved in carrying out the relief operation successfully, a rough estimate of the cost be submitted to the Collector for favour of transmission to the Government, namely: (*i*) 4 lakhs of rupees for test works, (*ii*) 5 lakhs for gratuitous relief in the shape of rice doles and clothing, and (*iii*) 2 lakhs for special relief measures, with request that the Government would continue making advances by instalments according to the requisitions of the Collector to be made from time to time according as the exigencies of the situation will demand."

Maulvi Ubedar Rahim moved an amendment that the motion of Sj. M. B. Sinha be postponed for a fortnight to enable further investigations and to collect necessary facts and figures regarding relief work at the Vishnupur subdivision.

It was seconded by Sj. Sasanka Sekhar Banerjee.

The amendment was put to vote first and it was lost and the original motion of Sj. M. B. Sinha was carried.

The President, Subdivisional Officer, Sadar, and Subdivisional Officer, Vishnupur, dissenting.

President then narrated the scope of work of the District Relief Committee and it was proposed by the President that an appeal be issued for collection of funds for the relief of the distress in the district and the members of the District Relief Committee should personally exert themselves for the collection of funds. The Secretary be requested to draft the appeal

in consultation with the President and the appeal be circulated under the signature of the President of District Relief Committee and to print as many copies as would be thought necessary by the Secretary.

This was unanimously carried.

Then the meeting dissolved.

Sd. R. C. DUTT,
President.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if there were any deaths due to starvation in that area?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: Not reported.

"Grow More Food" campaign.

40. Mr. BIRENDRA KISHORE ROY CHOWDHURY: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Agriculture Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) the steps taken so far by the Government in stimulating greater production of food in Bengal; and

(*b*) the amount of new acreage brought under cultivation as a result of the "Grow More Food" campaign?

MINISTER in charge of the AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Saiyed Muazzamuddin Hosain): (*a*) A food production committee was formed to advise Government on the various aspects of the subject. With a view to increasing the acreage under food crop the following schemes were brought under operation:—

(1) Scheme for the distribution of *aman* paddy seeds, 1942.

(2) Scheme for the distribution of *rabi* crop seeds, 1942.

(3) Scheme for the distribution of potato seeds, 1942.

(4) Scheme for the distribution of English vegetable seeds, 1942-43.

(5) Scheme for the distribution of 261 lakhs sugarcane cuttings among the sugarcane growers.

(6) Scheme for the distribution of *aus* paddy seeds, 1943.

(7) Scheme for the distribution of *aman* paddy seeds, 1943.

(8) Appointment of staff for the prevention of plant disease, 1943.

(9) Scheme for distribution of country vegetable seeds.

(10) Scheme for supply of vegetables for Defence Services.

(11) Scheme for distribution of *rabi* crop seeds, 1943.

(12) Scheme for the distribution of wheat seeds.

(13) Scheme for improvement of irrigation by means of Persian Wheel.

(14) Authorisation of Collectors to take up small scale irrigation and drainage projects for extension of cultivation up to limit of Rs.10,000 per district.

(15) Scheme for the distribution of potato seed and of manure for the potato crop, 1943.

(16) Scheme for the distribution of English vegetable seeds in rural areas, 1943.

(17) Scheme for the encouragement of vegetable growing in urban areas, 1943.

(18) Scheme for the distribution of *rabi* seeds in flood-affected areas, 1943.

(19) Scheme for the distribution of fodder seeds, 1943.

(*b*) The figures are not yet available.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: With reference to No. (4) Scheme for the distribution of English vegetable seeds, 1942-43, and No. (16) Scheme for the distribution of English vegetable seeds in rural areas, 1943, will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state in what districts or localities the schemes are being worked?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: As regards the Scheme No. (4), it is being worked in Darjeeling district; and as regards the Scheme No. (16), it is a scheme which will be in operation in the next cold weather in every district.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state for whom these vegetables are meant, who are the persons who will be expected to consume these vegetable products?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: Sir, it is expected that there will be very great demand for the defence services and the Scheme No. (4) may not be sufficient for meeting this demand; in order that there may not be a shortage for civilian population, this scheme, the Scheme No. (16), has been inaugurated for growing vegetables even in the rural areas.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state who are the people who are being given these English seeds to grow English vegetables? Are they the ordinary peasants? What class of people are they?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: These English seeds are generally given to people who are already aware of the process of growing English vegetables; they are *malis*, and other people near about municipal areas who know the process of sowing English seeds.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: May I know the amount of money that has been already spent upon this scheme?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: We have not yet spent any amount upon it; but the amount proposed to be spent is about Rs. 25,000.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state the names of the members forming the Producing Committee.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: I want notice.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Sir, the last time also practically the same question was put and the Hon'ble Minister wanted notice; and this time also he has asked for notice. I believe he has got notice enough.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: Unless I am given regular notice, how can I remember the names of the members?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Mazumdar, you cannot argue; you can only put a question in the ordinary way.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: All right, Sir. May I ask the Hon'ble Minister as to whether he has considered any other proposal excepting the distribution of seeds—paddy and other seeds—for encouraging the growth of more food?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: Irrigation projects have also been considered and they will cost about 37 lakhs. Collectors have been authorised to take up small irrigation projects in certain cases. So, apart from the scheme of distribution of seeds, irrigation projects have also been thought of.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Is this scheme of distribution of seeds and are these little irigation projects considered by the Hon'ble Minister to be sufficient?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: Manufacture and distribution of manure for increasing the manure wealth of the country—that is also one project. Other projects include one for prevention of the devastation of crops from water-hyacinth and other pests. According to the provisions of the Water-Hyacinth Act, we are erecting barricades here and there for the protection of crops. Various other schemes also are in contemplation in connection with the Grow More Food campaign. For instance, we are going to have a fodder scheme to increase the fodder and improve the cattle wealth of the country: these are all the schemes, Sir, that we have at present thought of.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Will the Hon'ble Minister please state if any of these 19 schemes has been put in operation in the district of Chittagong?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: I want notice.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Does the Government propose to examine the question of acquiring lands which are not under cultivation and to distribute them to landless labourers with some sort of capital to work them out?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: Government have no control over private lands. But as regards *khas mahal* lands, it is the policy of Government to give preference to tenants who lost their land by the process of diluvion, at the time of making settlements. As regards Government land, we are in correspondence with the Government of India for having control over waste lands under the Defence of India Rules, so that we may compel the landlords either to cultivate the waste lands themselves or in default can compel them to get these lands cultivated through other people, preferably the landless labourers or petty agriculturists.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: I do not say that the operation of the Land Acquisition Act——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Put your question in question form: no debate is permissible.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if Government propose to acquire land for this purpose under the Land Acquisition Act?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: Certainly not: that will be a cumbrous process. We are going to adopt a shortcut procedure and propose to acquire land under the Defence of India Rules, where Government would find that the landlords are not performing their duties and not cultivating the land.

The Bengal Food Adulteration Act.

41. Mr. NUR AHMED: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Public Health and Local Self-Government Department be pleased to state if it is a fact that many lacunæ have been detected in the existing Bengal Food Adulteration Act?

(*b*) Is it a fact that owing to these defects in the Acts, often difficulties are being experienced by courts in punishing really guilty persons?

(*c*) Is it a fact that a comprehensive Pure Food Bill was introduced in the Legislature and was referred to a Select Committee?

(*d*) If so, do the Government propose to proceed with the said Pure Food Bill?

MINISTER in charge of the PUBLIC HEALTH and LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi Jalaluddin Ahmad): (*a*) to (*d*) Yes.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Will the Government be pleased to state when the Pure Food Bill was referred to Select Committee?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi JALALUDDIN AHMED: It was referred to a Select Committee about 16 months ago.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Has the Select Committee completed its report?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi JALALUDDIN AHMED: I am not aware of it. Probably they have not.

Mr. Suresh Ch. Mazumdar.

42. Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Home Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) if it is a fact that Mr. Suresh Chandra Mazumdar, the proprietor of the *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, now a security prisoner, is badly ailing in his confinement; and

(*b*) if the answer to the above question be in the affirmative, whether the Government propose to release him immediately on grounds of health; if not, why not?

MINISTER in charge of the HOME DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin): (*a*) He has since been released.

(*b*) Does not arise.

Waterways Board.

43. Mr. NUR AHMED: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Communications and Works Department be pleased to state if any Waterways Board under section 3 and any Waterways District Committees under section 47 of the Bengal Waterways Act, 1934, have been formed in Bengal? If not, why not?

(*b*) Is he aware of a great demand for such Waterways Board and Waterways District Committees in Bengal?

(*c*) Do the Government propose to set up a Waterways Board and Waterways District Committees without further delay? If not, why not?

(*d*) What measures have been adopted by the Government of Bengal to improve waterways in Bengal?

MINISTER in charge of the COMMUNICATIONS and WORKS DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Mr. Barada Prasanna Pain): (*a*) When the Waterways Bill was being considered by the Legislature, assurances were given by Government that the Act would not be brought into operation until economic conditions improved and commercial interests had been consulted. This consultation took place in July, 1937, and since then the matter has been under the consideration of Government.

(*b*) There is such a demand in some quarters.

(*c*) The present time is not opportune for establishing a Waterways Board.

(*d*) Many schemes for improvement of communications by waterways have recently been executed. A River Research Institute has also been established with a view to testing schemes for river improvement by model experiments.

Misbehaviour of tramcar conductors.

44. Mr. HARIDAS MAJUMDAR: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Communications and Works Department be pleased to state if his attention has been drawn to a complaint made by one Nihar Bala Ghosh,

M.A., B.T., in one of the dailies of Calcutta as to the rash and negligent conduct of the driver or conductor of a tramcar No. 152 on the 9th August, 1943?

(*b*) Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state what steps are contemplated to be taken to prevent such recurrence in future?

(*c*) Will he be pleased to inform the House the result of the investigation which he promised to make in connection with a similar question answered on the 14th July, 1943?

The Hon'ble Mr. BARADA PRASANNA PAIN: (*a*) Yes.

(*b*) The Calcutta Tramways Co. is being advised that there is a good deal of public dissatisfaction about the manner in which passengers are allowed to get in or get out of cars, and that action should be taken by it to allay such dissatisfaction.

(*c*) Attention is drawn to the reply given on the 20th of this month to question No. 26.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state the contents of the reply Government received in response to the advice given to the Tramway Company?

The Hon'ble Mr. BARADA PRASANNA PAIN: I am not prepared to divulge it.

Breaches, etc., to bunds in Midnapore and Burdwan.

45. Mr. SHRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Communications and Works Department be pleased to state whether the breaches and damages caused to the bunds as a result of cyclone and flood in the districts of Midnapore and Burdwan are being attended to by the Government Engineers and when they are expected to be completed?

The Hon'ble Mr. BARADA PRASANNA PAIN: The breaches and damage caused to the Government Embankments and Taccavi Embankments under contract in the Midnapore district as a result of the cyclone on the 16th October, 1942, have been attended to by Government Engineers.

Repairs to the breaches in the above embankments have been completed. Repairs of other damage to Government properties are expected to be completed before the flood of 1944-45.

The breaches and damage caused as a result of flood this year to the Government embankments and Taccavi embankments under contract in the district of Midnapore are being attended to by Government Engineers. The breach in the Taccavi Embankment No. 3, Hoodah No. 3 on the Cossye Left near Panskura, has been closed. Repairs of the other damage are in progress and are expected to be completed soon.

The breach and damage caused as a result of flood this year to the Government Embankment in the Burdwan district are being attended to by Government Engineers. The repairs are in progress and are expected to be completed soon.

Persons living on the footpaths in Calcutta.

46. Mr. SRISH CHANDRA CHAKRAVERTI: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Revenue Department be pleased to state whether Government are aware of the fact that more than a lakh of persons are huddling on the footpaths of Calcutta undermining the health of the City?

(*b*) What arrangement, if any, has already been made to set up refugee camp on the outskirts of the city with due provision for food and sanitation? If not, when this is likely to be done?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: (*a*) The number of destitutes in Calcutta is considerable but it is not supposed to be as high as 1 lakh. There is a risk of their presence prejudicially affecting the health of the City. Government have however already taken up the question of relief and repatriation of these destitutes.

(*b*) At present 12 refugee camp relief centres have been arranged in the districts of 24-Parganas, Hooghly, Howrah and Midnapore. These can receive over 57,000 destitutes. Each camp has been supplied with foodstuffs including special invalid and children's diet such as sago, barley and sugar, etc. Proper medical and sanitary arrangements have also been made in each centre. They are being removed to these centres.

Mr. KADER BAKSH: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state whether statistics have been collected with regard to the original residence or rather the home districts of the people now coming to Calcutta?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: In many cases.

Mr. KADER BAKSH: Has any census been taken regarding the number of people now in Calcutta? If not, why not? In answer to question No. 46, it has been stated in (*a*) that "the number of destitutes in Calcutta is considerable but it is not supposed to be as high as 1 lakh". Then what is the exact figure?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: Sir, it is extremely difficult to give the exact number. But from what we gather from the different free kitchens, the number won't exceed 1 lakh.

Mr. KADER BAKSH: Are the outsiders allowed to take food in the free kitchens?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: Whoever goes there is given food.

Mr. KADER BAKSH: How is it then that——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Kader Baksh, you must not argue in that way. You may put the question in a question form.

Mr. KADER BAKSH: Will the Hon'ble Minister please state the number of people getting food from the free kitchens daily?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: Sir, I have nothing to add to what I have already said.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister please state how long they will take to bring this scheme of repatriation into operation? Have they got any idea as to how long it will take to put this scheme into operation?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: The scheme is already in operation.

Extension of the Bengal Tenancy Act to Darjeeling.

47. Mr. NAGENDRA NATH MOHOLANABISH: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Revenue Department be pleased to state whether the Government are aware that the tenants in the Darjeeling district have from time to time demanded the extension of the operation of the Bengal Tenancy Act to that district and are still demanding it?

(*b*) If so, do the Government propose to consider the advisability of extending the operation of the Bengal Tenancy Act to that district at an early date?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: (*a*) No.

(*b*) Does not arise.

Post-war reconstruction.

48. Mr. NUR AHMED: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Commerce, Labour and Industries Department be pleased to state if steps have been taken by the Government of Bengal to have any scheme or schemes for the post-war reconstruction in Bengal drawn up with the help of experts?

(*b*) Is he aware that the Government of the Punjab have already appointed a committee of experts to draw post-war reconstruction schemes for the rehabilitation of the Punjabi soldiers and others?

(*c*) Is he aware that the Governments of the Punjab, Bombay, and Madras are building special funds for financing such schemes?

(*d*) Is he also aware that the Government of the Punjab have approached the Government of India for two hundred crores of rupees for this purpose?

(*e*) Is it a fact that a motion under rule 112 of the Bengal Legislative Council Procedure Rules was adopted during the first session of the Bengal Legislative Council held in 1943, asking for fifty crores of rupees from the Government of India for the improvement of the conditions of the sailors, seamen, etc.

(*f*) If so, do the Government propose to take any action in this matter? If not, why not?

MINISTER in charge of the COMMERCE, LABOUR and INDUSTRIES DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Mr. Khwaja Shahabuddin): (*a*) It has been decided to appoint a committee to advise Governmnet on post-war reconstruction problems in Bengal and steps to that end are being taken. It is the

intention of Government that the committee will prepare schemes for post-war reconstruction likely to advance an all-round development of the Province.

(*b*) to (*d*) I have no information.

(*e*) and (*f*) The attention of the honourable member is invited to the reply given by Mr. Santosh Kumar Basu on behalf of Government to the motion referred to. His Excellency the Governor received a copy of the Address from the Hon'ble President of the House, but he has not yet received a copy of the debates on the motion relating to it.

Local Self-Government Advisory Committee.

49. Mr. NUR AHMED: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Public Health and Local Self-Government Department be pelased to state whether any Local Self-Government Advisory Committee has been formed in Bengal?

(*b*) Is it a fact that the annual conference of the All-Bengal Municipal Association and All-India Local Self-Government Association have demanded by a resolution the formation of such Advisory Committee for the good of the Local Self-Governing Bodies in Bengal?

(*c*) If the reply to (*a*) be in the negative, do the Government propose to form such Local Self-Government Advisory Committee in Bengal without further delay? If not, why not?

(*d*) Is he aware that in the United Kingdom, United States of America and the other European countries such advisory committees have been set up and have been functioning successfully?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi JALALUDDIN AHMAD: (*a*) No.

(*b*) A copy of a resolution passed at the All-Bengal Municipal Conference held in May last, recommending formation of a Local Self-Government Advisory Committee, consisting of the Minister in charge of Public Health and Local Self-Government Department and 7 representatives of municipalities to be elected by the Association has been received by Government and the matter is under consideration. No proposal for setting up such a committee appears to have been received by Government from the All-India Local Self-Government Association.

(*c*) The matter is receiving the attention of Government.

(*d*) I have no information.

Public Relations Committee.

50. Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Publicity Department be pleased to state if it is a fact that some members of the Bengal Legislature are working on remuneration in connection with the Government Public Relations Committee or the *Bengal Weekly* or *Banglar Katha*?

The Hon'ble Mr. BARADA PRASANNA PAIN (on behalf of the Hon'ble Mr. Pulin Behary Mullick): No.

Free grant of land to soldiers.

51. Mr. NUR AHMED: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Revenue Department be pleased to state if he is aware that the Government of the Punjab are making free grant of land with full proprietary right to the Punjabi soldiers, sailors and airmen who have been decorated for acts of gallantry in this war and also to their heirs in case of posthumous awards?

(*b*) If so, do the Government of Bengal propose to make similar free grants of land to the sailors, soldiers and airmen, recruited from Bengal (and to their heirs in case of posthumous awards) who have been decorated and would be decorated for acts of gallantry in this war? If not, why not?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: (*a*) No.

(*b*) Does not arise. The question of rewards for war services is a matter for the Government of India. This Government have, however, issued orders for giving preference to the Bengalee soldiers who have put in more than 6 months' effective service in the present war and to the Bengalee lascars who may have been exposed on the high seas to the danger and hardship of war, in the matter of settlement of *khas mahal* lands under ordinary terms and conditions.

Enhancement of rent for tea estates.

52. Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR (on behalf of Mr. Nagendra Nath Moholanabish): Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Revenue Department be pleased to state whether the Government are aware that on the expiry of the terms of lease of several Tea Estates in the Western Duars of the Government *khas mahal* in the district of Jalpaiguri during the last five years, the Government are demanding enhancement of rent to the tune of 200 per cent. to 400 per cent. of the previous rents? If so, do the Government propose to consider the advisability of remitting such excessive enhancement, or suspending such enhancement on the principles embodied in section 75A of the Bengal Tenancy Act, or directing that such enhanced rent should be enforced gradually and by instalments?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: The reassessment which was made in strict conformity with rule 57, Chapter 5 of Bengal Waste Lands Manual, 1936, resulted in increase of land revenue in one case over 300 per cent. and in all other cases over 100 per cent. The Bengal Tenancy Act has no application in these cases.

Objections against the assessment were disposed of by the Board of Revenue after giving a hearing to the representatives of the tea companies concerned. Government do not see any reason to interfere with the orders of the Board.

"Grow More Food" campaign.

53. Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR (on behalf of Dr. Kumud Sankar Ray): Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Agriculture Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) for how many years the "Grow More Food" campaign has been in operation in Bengal;

(*b*) the total amount of money spent year by year in the "campaign";

(*c*) the total increase in output in food crops year by year as a result of the campaign;

(*d*) the amount of seeds distributed or sold by the Government for furtherance of the campaign;

(*e*) what is the present stock of seeds available for the next seasonal crop in Bengal; and

(*f*) whether it is a fact that there would be considerable shortage of seeds for the coming season?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: (*a*) Since 1942-43.

(*b*) Amount spent during 1942-43—Rs. 19,80,000 approximately.

Amount proposed to be spent during 1943-44—Rs. 1,32,44,000 approximately.

(*c*) The figures are not yet available; but I have reason to believe that there will be appreciable increase in output in food crops as a result of the "Grow More Food" campaign.

(*d*) The following quantities of seeds were sold or given out on loan during 1942-43:—

			Mds.
Aman	...	...	200,000
Aus	...	...	38,875 (during 1942-43 and 1943-44).
Rabi	...	...	18,990
Potato	...	...	25,547

In addition 260 lakh cuttings of improved varieties of sugarcane were also distributed last year.

In the current year, the quantities of seeds distributed or are proposed to be distributed are shown below—

			Mds.
Aman	...	...	300,000
Rabi			42,000
Wheat			50,000
Fodder			100,000
Fodder			12,500
Castor			500

In addition, it is proposed to distribute 56,400 maunds of seeds of substitute crops of gram, lentil, *kalai*, potato, onion, wheat and *khasari* in the flooded areas in West Bengal. 537 lbs. of each of six varieties of Indian vegetables and six varieties of English vegetables will also be distributed in the next cold weather.

(*e*) It is not possible to estimate correctly the stock of seeds with the agriculturists, but it is believed that except the poorest among them, the cultivators have generally got their stock of seeds. It is only the poorer agriculturists who have eaten up their seeds due to distress.

(*f*) There is apprehension of some shortage and that is why Government arranged for distribution of seeds in extensive scale.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state what is the amount of seeds which have been distributed to Chittagong?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: It is not possible to give the exact figure without notice.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if he is aware that the distribution of seeds fell far short of the requirements of this province?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: The distribution of seeds did not really fall far short of the actual requirement. It is on account of the distress and abnormal prices that the demand of seeds has been so great; but really the seeds are available in the localities. Government cannot possibly satisfy the demand only because the people want seeds while as a matter of fact seeds are available there; because if Government satisfy such a demand, they will have to supply 2 crores 62 lakh maunds of paddy alone of which the cost even at Rs. 20 will be 52 crores of rupees. Government policy in respect of improved seeds is that they have definite plans according to which they have been extending the areas under improved seeds gradually year after year, and as regards ordinary seeds they are distributed only in the distressed areas where we find that on account of agricultural calamities or pest there has been a real dearth of seeds. We import seeds to those places in order to supply seeds to the poor agriculturists who cannot take the trouble of going to far-off places for seeds. That has been the policy of Government and according to that policy there has not been any shortage which has not got satisfied.

Khan Bahadur ABDUL GOFRAN: Will the Hon'ble Minister please state the respective proportion of improved and ordinary seeds?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: Of these, one lakh maunds were departmental approved seeds and two lakh maunds last year were ordinary seeds.

***Khan Bahadur* ABDUL GOFRAN:** Wherefrom were those ordinary seeds as well as improved seeds obtained?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: Ordinary seeds were purchased from the districts where they were improved and distributed in the same district to the poor agriculturists.

Marketing of Agricultural Produce.

54. Mr. NUR AHMED: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Co-operative Credit and Rural Indebtedness Department be pleased to state if any measures have been adopted or are being adopted by the Government in Bengal for—

(*i*) better marketing of agricultural produce through Co-operative Societies;

(*ii*) linking credit with marketing on the line of Madras system;

(*iii*) financial aid to Producers' Co-operative Societies for construction of godown and repayment of loans in kind;

(*iv*) co-operative arrangements for production and marketing of new varieties of commercial crops through Co-operative Societies, on the lines of such societies as in the United Provinces and Bombay;

(*v*) organisation of more Ghee and Milk Co-operative Societies in places where milk supply is adequate;

(*vi*) linking up Co-operative Procedures' and Consumers' Societies;

(*vii*) the arrangements for compulsory sale of agricultural produce through Co-operative Societies, on the lines of such societies as in Canada and South Africa; and

(*viii*) the federation of Marketing Societies Union?

(*b*) If so, what are these measures? If not, why not?

Mr. BIREN ROY (on behalf of the Hon'ble Mr. Jogendra Nath Mandal): (*a*) (*i*), (*ii*), (*iv*), (*vi*) and (*viii*) Yes.

(*iii*) A scheme for financial aid to Producers' Co-operative Societies for construction of godown is under consideration of the Government. Loans are collected in kind through Producers' Societies in areas where they are functioning.

(*v*) Yes, so far as only Milk Societies are concerned.

(*vii*) No.

(*b*) (*i*) There are in all 115 marketing societies, marketing the produce (chiefly paddy and rice) of their members by receiving it on payment at the market rate when they cannot hold it on and at the same time the market is low and by arranging its disposal when the market is later sufficiently high, the benefit of the increased price going to the members.

(*ii*) The policy of linking credit with marketing is being followed. It has been given effect to in the case of a number of Central Banks operating in paddy-growing areas where there are also marketing societies. The Central Banks advance crop loans through the rural societies to their members and the same are collected in kind at harvest through the agency of the marketing societies which work in co-operation with the Central Banks.

(*iii*) Ordinarily marketing societies construct godowns and meet other initial expenses out of share capital raised. In order, however, to provide further facility to the societies in this respect a scheme for subsidy or loans (at concessional rate of interest and repayable over a period extending to 15 years) or both, as the case may be, is under consideration of Government.

For "repayment of loans" in kind *vide* (*ii*) above.

(*iv*) For the production of better varieties of sugarcane and for their better marketing two sugarcane growers' unions have been established and also for the production of better quality of jute and their marketing two jute sale societies have recently been set up in co-operation with the Indian Central Jute Committee. The marketing societies also encourage cultivation of new varieties of commercial crops such as ground-nuts, cotton, English vegetables and mustard and *rabi* crops where there were no cultivation thereof and supply seeds to the members. They are, however, not grown on such a large scale that might call for any special arrangement for their marketing.

(*v*) There are no "ghee" societies. Producers find it more convenient to sell the raw milk than prepare "ghee" for sale. Ghee is, however, manufactured at the milk socieites union out of milk collected from the milk societies. Milk societies are organised subject to demand and prospect of success.

(*vi*) Linking of producers' and consumers' societies is in its initial phase. It is existing between the producers' and consumers' societies at Gosaba and gradual extension of such linking at other places is in view.

(*vii*) The co-operative movement has yet to develop before compulsory sale of agricultural produce through Co-operative Societies would be enforced. Agricultural co-operative marketing is only a recent phase in this province.

(*viii*) The marketing societies situated in the various parts of the province are federated into a Central Society known as the Central Paddy Sale Society and located at Ultadanga (Calcutta).

Khan Bahadur M. A. MOMIN: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state in what localities all these marketing societies are actually situated?

Mr. BIREN ROY: I want notice.

Khan Bahadur M. A. MOMIN: Has the department received any reports about the working of these paddy marketing societies?

Mr. BIREN ROY: Yes.

Khan Bahadur M. A. MOMIN: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to lay the reports on the table?

Mr. BIREN ROY: I want notice.

Khan Bahadur ABDUL GOFRAN: Sir, on a point of information. I put two questions before the last session: one to the Hon'ble Minister in charge of Revenue and another to the Hon'ble Minister in charge of Agriculture, and these questions were admitted by you. May I know when I may expect answer to those questions?

Mr. PRESIDENT: What were your questions about?

Khan Bahadur ABDUL GOFRAN: One regarding test relief work in my district—the district of Noakhali, and the other regarding distribution of seeds.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Will Government supply the information?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: I shall make enquiries.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Nothing has been received in the Council Department.

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: Sir, may I make the statement in connection with question No. 21 of Mr. Nagendra Nath Moholanabish?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Yes.

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: Sir, in connection with the answer to question No. 21 of Mr. Nagendra Nath Moholanabish which was given by me on the 15th instant, I beg to state that the following tentative decisions of Government on the Land Revenue Commission's recommendations were announced on the floor of the Assembly on the 15th March, 1943——

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA MUKHERJEE: On a point of order, Sir. Is the Hon'ble Minister in order in reading the statement he made before the Assembly?

Mr. PRESIDENT: He can refer to it.

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: (1) That Government accept the policy of bringing the actual cultivators into direct relation with Government and of acquiring in the first instance the interests of all classes of rent-receivers above the lowest grade of cash-paying under-*raiyats;*

(2) that the rates of compensation should vary between 10 and 15 times the net profit according to the nature and circumstances of each estate or interest;

(3) that a tribunal of a judicial character should be set up for assessment of compensation in each case and the tribunal's decision shall be final;

(4) that Government should undertake legislation in the matter on these lines as early as possible after going through the technical formalities enjoined under the Government of India Act; and

(5) that after these proposals are considered by a committee of leaders of this House, in view of the financial and other risks involved, this experiment should first be tried in a district where the revisional operations are almost in a process of completion.

Khan Bahadur M. A. MOMIN: Sir, is it permissible to ask supplementary questions regarding this-statement?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Yes.

Khan Bahadur M. A. MOMIN: Will the Hon'ble the Revenue Minister be pleased to state how soon we can expect that these necessary legislative measures will be taken?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: Sir, as I have already stated, the whole thing is under the consideration of Government. Point No. 5—experiment—will be taken up as soon as revisional operations are over.

Khan Bahadur M. A. MOMIN: Is it not a fact that revisional operations have been completed in the district of Faridpur?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: No.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: Sir, may I ask whether the policy adumbrated by the previous Government is also the policy of the present Government?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: I have nothing to add.

Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: Sir, may I ask the Revenue Minister again what is the usefulness of referring to an answer given in another place by the previous Ministry, the Ministry which is not functioning at the present moment? What is the decision arrived at by the present Government? Whether they have come to any decision or not?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: Sir, I want notice.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Sir, may I rise on a point of information regarding the Public Accounts Committee of the Council? It was understood that a decision would be arrived at with yourself and the Finance Minister regarding this Public Accounts Committee——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Das, will you please wait for a few minutes? You raise your point after the Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Saiyed Muazzamuddin Hosain has made his statement.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: Sir, in accordance with the provision of sub-rule (2) of Rule 95 of the Bengal Legislative Council Procedure Rules, I have the honour to place for the information of the Council the following statement showing the action taken by Government on the resolution regarding reclamation of waste lands of Bengal by initiating small irrigational projects in the Eastern and Northern Bengal that was passed by the Council on the 5th March, 1943:—

(1) In order to provide irrigational facilities for the cultivation of wheat, sanction of Government has been given for providing 20 Persian wheels in 20 selected centres. These Persian wheels working on a rotational

system would command an area of 50 acres and would thus help in bringing 1,000 acres under wheat cultivation at a total estimated recurring and non-recurring cost of Rs. 80,000.

(2) Government have also authorised the Collectors of districts to spend up to Rs. 10,000 each on small irrigation schemes which will immediately help to bring more land under cultivation or increase the production of cultivable lands. The lists of such schemes as received from the Collectors have been examined in consultation with the Irrigation Department and extra allotments have also been made where necessary.

(3) Government have sanctioned the creation of a post of Agricultural Development Commissioner and Rai Bahadur N. C. Sen, Director of Land Records and Surveys, Bengal, has been appointed thereto from the 5th July, 1943. The primary functions of the Development Commissioner particularly in regard to reclaiming culturable waste lands among others lie in the following direction:—

(*a*) to make a thorough survey of the province with a view to find out what culturable waste lands and railway side lands, *bils* or low lands can be brought under cultivation,

(*b*) to suggest ways and means for bringing such lands under cultivation by sinking tube-wells, granting of loans, supply of seeds, manures, etc., erection of bunds, construction of barricades and re-excavation of irrigation channels, etc., and

(*c*) to be in touch with the big landholders and the planters so as to induce them to bring the existing culturable waste land under cultivation as far as possible and to move the railway authorities for releasing as much surplus side lands as possible.

(4) The Irrigation Department are also seriously engaged on schemes of drainage and irrigation for execution during this year and they have allotted Rs. 35,930 during the current financial year for the following schemes in connection with "Grow More Food" Campaign:—

Schemes.	Allotments.	Estimated cost
	Rs.	Rs.
(1) Borar Char Khal Scheme (Mymensingh)	3,105	3,950
(2) Connectirg Bil Gazaria with the Nabaganga river (Jessore)	900	1,500
(3) Scheme for constructing a sluice in Chak Talirabad (Khulna) ..	225	nil
(4) Erecting a bund in mouza Mechaghona (Khulna)	700	nil
(5) Erecting a bund in mouza Khala (Khulna)	2,500	nil
(6) Hanger Khal Scheme (Chittagong)	6,000	30,747
(7) Dhurang Khal (Chittagong)	22,500	26,367
	35,930	62,564

The Irrigation Adviser to the Government of India has also since approved the following schemes and the Government of India have sanctioned 50 per cent. of the estimated cost thereof, the other half being met from the Provincial revenues:—

Schemes.	Estimated cost. Rs.
(1) Improvement of the Gomai Mardan Bil in the district of Chittagong ...	24,888
(2) Bara Bil Drainage scheme in the district of Murshidabad ...	18,081
(3) Khairamari Bil Drainage Scheme in the district of Murshidabad ..	19,921
(4) Excavating a drainage channel from the Auliapur Bada to the Bidyadhari river in the district of 24-Parganas ...	1,57,114
(5) Chalinde-Gazna Project in the district of Khulna ...	28,000
(6) Constructing marginal embankment and repairing the old bund along the Nowee Khal in the district of 24-Parganas ...	3,000
	2,51,504

Besides these, certain other schemes are also under examination by the Irrigation Adviser to the Government of India.

(5) The Revenue Department have also allotted a lump grant at the disposal of the Collector, Midnapore, for test relief works and the following two schemes have been taken up by the Collector, Midnapore:—

(1) Silt clearance of the Panipia Khal (Midnapore).

(2) Widening the bed of the Kalighya river (Midnapore).

Khan Bahadur M. A. MOMIN: Is it permissible to ask the Hon'ble Minister any question on this?

Mr. PRESIDENT: If you want to get any point cleared, certainly you can put a question.

Khan Bahadur M. A. MOMIN: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state whether or not it was originally sanctioned that 100 Persian wheels should be purchased and not 20?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: My idea was 100. I think 20 is mis-print or mis-typing. I shall look into the matter and let the honourable member know definitely.

Khan Bahadur M. A. MOMIN: I do not grudge the Chittagong Division all the improvements made. I ask the Hon'ble Minister why the Burdwan district which is under damage by floods is entirely neglected?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: These schemes have been taken up according to the state in which they were. Those schemes which have reached maturity have been taken up first and others are being matured. I think every district will come into the scheme in the long run sooner or later.

Khan Bahadur M. A. MOMIN: Has the Hon'ble Minister received any scheme forwarded to him by the Collectors of Burdwan and Birbhum?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: These schemes are dealt with in the Irrigation Department. As a matter of fact, I am making this statement on behalf of that department.

Khan Bahadur M. A. MOMIN: Then why not answer on behalf of that department?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: It is, Sir, merely a statement of action taken on a resolution passed by this House.

Mr. PRESIDENT: When you undertake to make a statement on behalf of your colleagues, I think you are expected to reply supplementary questions put on the statement.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: The sub-rule 2 of rule 95 wants a statement to be made as to what action taken on a particular resolution and if different Ministers are affected is it your desire that I should reply on their behalf?

Mr. PRESIDENT: When a statement is made by Government, if the House wants to be clear on a particular point arising out of the statement Government must be in a position to satisfy the House.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: This is really not a question of that nature. It is not clearing anything in the statement. If the honourable members want further information whether this district or that district has been taken up or not, this has nothing to do with the statement itself. I take the responsibility of clearing up anything which is not clear in the statement.

Khan Bahadur M. A. MOMIN: May I know, Sir, whether it will be possible for this House as a whole or a committee of the House to examine the schemes which have now been submitted by the Hon'ble the Agriculture Minister?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Khan Bahadur, that is altogether a different question. Either you should put a short-notice question on that particular point or you should move a resolution, otherwise it will be very difficult for the Hon'ble Minister to reply to your question here and now.

Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Yes, Mr. Das.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: As I was just saying, Sir, there was an understanding that the Hon'ble the Finance Minister would consult you and the Speaker of the Assembly and come to a decision as to whether we of this House would have the right and privilege of having a committee to report on the accounts of this province. An answer was expected to be given in this House last session but the current session is also going to end and we do not yet know what decision has been arrived at by Government. Sir, we have a right under the provisions of rules 108 and 109 of the Rules of Procedure of this House to have a committee to report on the accounts of the province; and after that report is submitted, we have a right under section 109 of the same rules to have a discussion over it.

Mr. BIREN ROY: Sir, may I make a statement? It has been found that Public Accounts Committees are not attached to the Upper House of any other province. But as the matter has been brought up in the form of a privilege of the House, it is engaging the attention of Government as to whether it is possible to have a Joint Committee of the Council and the Assembly. This matter will very soon be placed before the Cabinet so as to arrive at a final decision.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Sir, we have nothing to do with the point as to what the Upper Houses in other provinces in India are doing or not doing with regard to this question. That is not the point. Sir, the answer has always been that the question will be decided very soon, whenever the matter has been raised in the House. This question was raised about two years ago even during the regime of the previous Government and also during the administration of the present Government; but every time we have been treated to the answer that the question will be decided very soon. But now we want a clear and distinct answer as to when the question is going to be answered finally. Will it be within a week, within a month or when? We cannot be content with an answer that the matter is going to be decided very soon.

Mr. BIREN ROY: It may be before the coming session; because it is coming before the Cabinet very soon.

Mr. PRESIDENT: As the matter affects the privilege of the House, the Chair as the custodian of its privileges must make it clear to Government that this question has been hanging fire for a very long time and they should come to a decision without further delay. On behalf of the House I think I may say that the House claims this privilege under section 169 of the Government of India Act, where the word "Legislature" has been used, and not merely a single House of the Legislature. I believe that it is the unanimous opinion of the House that an answer should be forthcoming from Government as soon as possible. I hope Government would take note of the desire of the House that either the House should be given a separate Public Accounts Committee to which it is entitled or representation on a joint committee of both the Houses.

Mr. Haridas Mazumdar rose.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Mazumdar, do you want to say anything on the same question?

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: No, Sir. I would want to draw your attention to the paucity of the supply and distribution of soft coke in Calcutta. I have already tabled a short-notice question on this subject. Soft coke is manufactured by second class collieries for domestic purposes——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Are you putting a question?

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: I want to know whether Government propose to do anything with regard to the situation and I want a statement to be made by Government. I have already put in a short-notice question, and am prepared to read it out, if you so desire.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The short-notice questions are there and I understand those questions reached the department only last evening. They have not been admitted; in fact, they have not been examined as yet.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: I am drawing the attention of the House and particularly the Hon'ble Minister in charge of this department to the grave situation that has arisen regarding the matter of soft coal. That is why I have put in a short-notice question——

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: About what?

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: About the dearth of soft coal. Supply and distribution of soft coal in Calcutta is very meagre. Rice at present is monopolising the whole attention. But, for the want of soft coal also people are suffering. I understand that there is a proposal not to supply wagons to certain collieries which manufacture soft coke which is generally used by the people. I want, Sir, the Government of Bengal to represent to the Government of India strongly on this matter, so that there might be no shortage of wagons. With regard to the question of stoppage of supply, we should like to have a statement from Government.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Are Government prepared to make a reply?

Mr. BIREN ROY: I may draw the attention of the honourable member that the Hon'ble Minister in charge of Civil Supplies is not present in the House and it is wasting the time of the House to——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. It is not wasting the time of the House. The honourable members can certainly put questions on important and urgent matters of public interest and ask Government to make a statement: it is for the Government to say whether they are prepared to make a statement or not; or to give assurance that a statement will be made tomorrow.

Mr. BIREN ROY: Statement will be made tomorrow: that assurance I can give.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: On a point of information, Sir. Several questions of mine admitted by you this session. Those questions have not yet come. If they do not come tomorrow, will they stand over till next session or will they lapse?

Mr. PRESIDENT: They will stand.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Thank you, Sir.

Point of Privilege.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Bankim Chandra Mukherji raised a point of privilege on the last occasion and I promised to look into the proceedings. I have now done so and I may just inform him that he did not rise on a point of personal explanation. He wanted to supplement his speech by reading a statement and by supplying additional information to the House in general and to the Hon'ble Minister in particular: that is what he did. He was certainly not within his rights in doing so, as having already exceeded the time-limit he resumed his seat and another member was in possession of the House. So, Mr. Mukherji, I will just point it out to you that you were not within your rights. Mr. Mukherji referred to certain observations in May's Parliamentary Practice, but they were irrelevant. He referred to pages 312-13 of May's Parliamentary Practice which deal with personal explanations. But Mr. Mukherji did not rise on a point of personal explanation. As regards reference to page 338, that deals with a point of procedure of the House of Commons. But in this House the decision of the Chair is final. I would refer Mr. Mukherji to section 13 of the Bengal Legislative Council Procedure Rules. So, that reference to May's Parliamentary Practice was also irrelevant.

Mr. BANKIM CHANDRA MUKHERJI: May I make a statement? I wanted to give supplementary information to clear up certain matters——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Mukherji you should have said that you wanted to rise on a point of personal explanation.

The Bengal Vagrancy Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: We will now take up the consideration of the Bengal Vagrancy Bill, 1943, clause by clause. As there are no amendments, I do not propose to take up each clause separately.

The question before the House is: that clauses 2 to 29 stand part of the Bill.

(The motion was agreed to.)

Mr. PRESIDENT: The question before the House is: that clause 1 stand part of the Bill.

(The motion was agreed to.)

Mr. PRESIDENT: The question before the House is that the Title and Preamble be added to the Bill.

(The motion was agreed to.)

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi JALALUDDIN AHMAD: Sir, I beg to move that the Bengal Vagrancy Bill, 1943, as settled in Council, be passed——

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Sir, on a point of order. Are we taking up the third reading of the Bill? If so, then I object. Because the second reading and third reading of a Bill cannot be taken up on one and the same day.

Mr. PRESIDENT: If there is objection, I cannot permit the third reading to be proceeded with today. We will take up the third reading tomorrow.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Moreover, Sir, we are sitting tomorrow, as the statement regarding the supply of soft coke has been promised tomorrow by the Parliamentary Secretary, Mr. Biren Roy.

Mr. PRESIDENT: In that case, the Hon'ble Minister may move his motion tomorrow. The Chair either can allow the third reading to be taken up on the same day or on the following day; but as there is objection, I will not allow you to move your motion today.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi JALALUDDIN AHMAD: But there is no amendment. Rule 67 of the Bengal Legislative Council Procedure Rules states that "If no amendment is made to the clauses of a Bill after a motion that a Bill be taken into consideration has been agreed to by the Council, a motion that the Bill be passed may be made at once without notice".

In this case there is no amendment. So I do not understand why the third reading of the Bill cannot be taken up today.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The word there is "may", and not "shall". As there is objection and as Government have allotted two days for consideration of the Bill, you should move your motion tomorrow.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Sir, I rise on a point of privilege. We were given only two days for discussion of non-official business and unfortunately we did not get two full days for transacting non-official business. As I have got a very simple motion under rule 112 about importation of foodstuffs from foreign countries, may I have your permission and the permission of the House to move it today?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Today is not a non-official day. It is an official day.

Mr. NUR AHMED: May I request, Sir, that tomorrow after the official business is over, an opportunity may be given to me to move the motion as it will not take a very long time?

Mr. PRESIDENT: It is never the practice to have official and non-official business on the same day.

The House stands adjourned till 9 a.m. tomorrow.

Adjournment.

The Council then adjourned till 9 a.m. on Tuesday, the 28th September, 1943.

Members absent.

The following members were absent from the meeting held on the 27th September, 1943:—

(1) Khan Bahadur Naziruddin Ahmad.
(2) Rai Bahadur Keshab Chandra Banerjee.
(3) Mr. Hamidul Huq Chowdhury.
(4) Mr. Bankim Chandra Datta.
(5) Mr. Kamini Kumar Dutta.
(6) Mr. Mohamed Hossain.
(7) Mr. M. R. Jaipuria.
(8) Mr. Humayun Kabir.
(9) Maulana Muhammad Akrum Khan.
(10) Mr. J. McFarlane.
(11) Mr. Nagendra Nath Moholanabish.
(12) Khan Sahib Subidali Molla.
(13) Mr. Naresh Nath Mookerjee.
(14) Mr. T. B. Nimmo.
(15) Mr. R. S. Purssell.
(16) Khan Bahadur Muklesur Rahaman.
(17) Khan Bahadur Kazi Abdur Rashid.
(18) Dr. Kumud Sankar Ray.

PGP-4314-6596A-750

Third Session, 1943—No. 9.

THE COUNCIL met in the Legislative Chamber of the Legislative Building, Calcutta, on Tuesday, the 28th September, 1943, at 9 a.m., being the ninth day of the Third Session of 1943, pursuant to section 62(2)(*a*) of the Government of India Act, 1935.

Mr. President (the Hon'ble Sir BIJOY PRASAD SINGH ROY, K.C.I.E.) was in the Chair.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Mr. PRESIDENT: I find that the Hon'ble Mr. Pain is abent; so I pass over question No. 55 for the time being. Question No. 56 also stands in his name; so that too is passed over for the time being. No. 57 stands in the name of Sir Nazimuddin. But he too is absent, so that question is passed over also.

Scarcity of quinine supply.

58. Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Forest and Excise Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) if it is a fact that there is an acute scarcity in the supply of quinine in this province;

(*b*) if so, what steps the Government propose to take to extend the cultivation of cinchona in the Province; and

(*c*) what was the pre-war price of quinine and what is its present price?

Mr. BIREN ROY, Parliamentary Secretary (on behalf of the Hon'ble Mr. Premhari Barma): (*a*) Owing to stoppage of imports, there has been shortage in the supply of quinine and its distribution has been rationed.

(*b*) Government have already embarked upon a comprehensive programme of extension of cultivation of cinchona in this Province.

(*c*) The pre-war price was Rs. 18, and the present price is Rs. 37, per lb. of quinine sulphate.

Mr. HARIDAS MAJUMDAR: Will the Honourable Minister be pleased to state the quantities of quinine distributed, district by district?

Mr. BIREN ROY: I want notice.

(Question No. 59 standing in the name of Mr. Naresh Nath Mookerjee was put by Rai Bahadur Brojendra Mohan Maitra, but the Hon'ble Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy was not present in the Chamber to reply to it.)

Mr. PRESIDENT: I just draw the attention of the Hon'ble the Leader of the House that Government should be in a position to reply to questions when they are down on the Order Paper? If Ministers after Ministers are absent, then I do not think that is fair to the House.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: It is very unfortunate, Sir, that the Hon'ble Mr. Suhrawardy is not present; he will perhaps be a little late. So I would suggest that the questions may be left over for the time being till he arrives.

Mr. PRESIDENT: How many questions shall I pass over in this way?

Test relief work in Noakhali district.

60. Khan Bahadur ABDUL GOFRAN: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Revenue Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) if he is aware of the very acute distress now prevailing in the districts of Noakhali, Chittagong and Tippera;

(*b*) if so, what steps, if any, have been taken for giving relief to people living in this area;

(*c*) what sums so far have been given from provincial revenues and from District Funds for the test relief work and gratuitous relief work in the district of Noakhali;

(*d*) who have been appointed pay-masters for these works; and

(*e*) if he will be pleased to place on the Table a statement showing how much has been given to each Union Board for test relief and gratuitous relief with dates of each payment and the names of persons to whom these payments have been made by the District Board?

MINISTER in charge of the REVENUE DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Mr. Tarak Nath Mukerjea): (*a*) Yes. Severe distress prevails in the districts of Noakhali and Chittagong. In Tippera although not so severe yet it is also acute.

(*b*) Test relief works have been started in all these districts. Free Gruel Kitchens have been established in various centres of these districts and food is being distributed to the distressed people free.

(*c*) Rs. 4,18,000 for test relief works and Rs. 5,11,500 for gratuitous relief have been sanctioned for the district of Noakhali out of provincial revenues. No contribution for gratuitous relief was made by the District Board.

(*d*) Presidents of Union Boards have in general been appointed pay-masters and distributors for these works in the rural area and the Chairmen of the municipalities in the urban area.

(*e*) The District Board did not make any payment for gratuitous relief. A statement is laid on the library table showing dates, amounts and names of persons to whom money for test relief works was advanced by the District Board from the Government grants.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Arising out of (c), will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state how much money has been sanctioned for test relief and gratuitous relief in Chittagong?

The Hon'ble Mr. TARAK NATH MUKERJEA: Rs. 4,15,000 for gratuitous relief and Rs. 2,30,000 for test relief.

Mr. PRESIDENT: There are some other questions replies to which will be given by Sir Nazimuddin. I am waiting for him. He rang me up saying that he might be a little late.

There are three more questions concerning the Civil Supplies Department. One by Mr. B. K. Roy Chowdhury, one by Khan Sahib Nurul Amin and the other by Mr. Jaipuria. Now, who is going to reply for Mr. Suhrawardy?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: Sir, I can read out the answers but cannot answer the supplementary questions arising out of them.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: We want to ask supplementary questions.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Leader of the House will realise that today is the last day of the session and several questions are outstanding specially with regard to the Civil Supplies Department. I find there are altogether 54 questions outstanding including 22 from the last session. Government should have made some arrangement to reply to these quesions at least on the last day of the session.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur SAIYED MUAZZAMUDDIN HOSAIN: I will draw the attention of the Hon'ble Minister.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I hope you will do so.

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN: Sir, may I suggest one thing? It seems none of us is prepared to answer supplementary questions. So, the answers may be read and supplementary questions, as far as possible, may be answered; it being understood that those supplementary questions which are not answered will be answered next session.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I do not think that is going to satisfy the members. Reading of the answers is not so much necessary. Replies to the supplementary questions are most important. I quite appreciate the desire to answer as many supplementary questions as you can but the Hon'ble Minister in charge or somebody else who has studied the questions should be here to reply to the questions.

Mr. BIREN ROY: Sir, may I make the following statement for the information of the honourable members? Yesterday there was a question in regard to the marketing societies in Bengal. Answers to that question have been laid on the Table

Mr. PRESIDENT: I find that no copy of the statement has been supplied to the Council Secretary. A copy should be supplied to the Council Secretary as well.

Mr. BIREN ROY: I have not got more than one copy, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Government Department knows that merely laying of a statement on the Table is not sufficient. Will you kindly see that a copy is supplied to the Council Secretary?

Mr. BIREN ROY: Yes, Sir.

Curfew Order in Midnapore.

57. Rai Bahadur KESHAB CHANDRA BANERJEE: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Home Department be pleased to state if curfew order was in force in any of the cyclone affected areas in Midnapore and 24-Parganas and, if so, if it was relaxed in all such areas on the evening of the 16th October last?

(*b*) Was collective fine imposed on the people of any of the affected areas for political reasons?

(*c*) If the answer to part (*b*) is in the affirmative, will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state whether any attempt was made for the realisation of the fine after the 16th October in any of those places?

MINISTER in charge of the HOME DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin): (*a*) Curfew was in force only in the town areas of Tamluk and Mahishadal. The orders were withdrawn from the 31st January, 1943. There was no curfew order anywhere else in the mufassal and the question of relaxation in such areas does not arise.

(*b*) Yes.

(*c*) No.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state what were the political reasons in view that induced them to take such action?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: It was considered necessary in the interest of the people of the place.

Control shops in Calcutta.

58. Mr. NARESH NATH MOOKERJEE: (*a*) Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Civil Supplies Department be pleased to state when the promised 400 Control Shops are likely to be opened?

(*b*) Will they sell Coal and Standard Cloth in addition to foodstuffs?

(*c*) Will sales be restricted to the people of the immediate neighbourhood or to the public at large?

(*d*) Will sales be made on the basis of ration cards? If so, do the Government propose to take a fresh census through the A.R.P. as the last census was taken at a time when many people had evacuated the city due to the air raid scare?

(*e*) Will the public be required to form queues in front of these shops daily or will rations be distributed on the basis of weekly requirements on dates to be fixed for each family?

(*f*) If not, what steps do the Government propose to take to prevent the present congestion and inconvenience experienced by the poor clerks in obtaining their daily ration of food in time and with the least possible delay so that they may be able to go to work in time?

(*g*) What steps do Government propose to take to ensure supplies to the independent and unattached labourers who have to join work very early in the morning?

(*h*) What steps do the Government propose to take to help the employers, industrial concerns, municipalities and other similar concerns to distribute rations to their employees? Do the Government propose to restore the priorities which have been cancelled?

(*i*) Will the scheme of distribution through the various Chambers of Commerce be discontinued?

(*j*) What steps are being taken to ensure daily supply of rations to Seamen, employed in the harbour for ships' work, who were hitherto receiving their rations through the Calcutta Shipping, Painting and Ships' Labour Contractors' Association, and whose quota has been discontinued from the 1st July, 1943?

MINISTER in charge of the CIVIL SUPPLIES DEPARTMENT (the Hon'ble Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy): (*a*) It is proposed to open the shops at the rate of about 25 per week with effect from September 24th.

(*b*) Not at this stage.

(*c*) Sales will be restricted to ration-card holders who are registered at the distribution centre and who live within the zone served by a particular shop.

(*d*) The answer to both parts of the question is in the affirmative.

(*e*) No. No queues will be required to be formed, and weekly requirements will be allotted.

(*f*) Does not arise.

(*g*), (*h*) and (*j*) The subject matter of these questions is under consideration in connection with the proposed rationing scheme.

(*i*) It will form part of the rationing scheme.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: With reference to (*a*), will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if from the 24th September up to now any shop has been opened; if so, how many?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: I cannot answer that question without previous notice.

Criminal offences against women.

81. Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Home Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) the total number of criminal offences committed against women in Bengal in 1942;

(*b*) out of these in how many cases the victims and the culprits were Moslems, and in how many cases non-Moslems; and

(*c*) what administrative steps have the Government taken to reduce the number of offences against women?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: (*a*) 578.

(*b*) *Victims*—

Muslims—306.

Non-Muslims—272.

Culprits—

Muslims—811.

Non-Muslims—339.

(*c*) Offenders were prosecuted under the law.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: With reference to (*c*), will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state whether all the culprits were prosecuted?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: I have grave doubts.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Will the Hon'ble Minister please state how many of them were prosecuted?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: I want notice.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Will the Hon'ble Minister kindly enlighten the House as to the number of convictions for this offence during the last year?

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: I want notice.

Alhadj Khan Bahadur Shaikh MUHAMMAD JAN: Sir, my question No. 82 has not been answered yet.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. Let me finish other questions first. There are three questions relating to the Civil Supplies Department which were received very late and there was no time to print up the replies. Therefore, what I suggest is that the Hon'ble Minister will kindly read the questions as well as the answers. A copy of the questions and answers will be supplied to the Hon'ble Minister.

Scarcity of sugar in Calcutta.

62. **Mr. BIRENDRA KISHORE ROY CHOWDHURY:** Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Civil Supplies Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) the amount of sugar available per month in Calcutta for the civil population;

(*b*) if it is the policy of the Government to allow the sale of sugar to the civil population only through a few controlled shops;

(*c*) if he is aware that at present sugar is available only in a few such controlled shops and as a result people have to stand in long queues for purchasing sugar;

(*d*) if he is aware that those who cannot afford the time and the trouble to stand in long queues have to go without sugar; and

(*e*) if he is contemplating any change in the system of selling sugar to the civil population?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: (*a*) The amount available in a month depends upon what has been received.

(*b*) No; sugar is available in bulk to large consumers, to employees in factories and officers through employers, and to families who combine among themselves and obtain sugar for their monthly requirements.

(*c*) There are queues before some shops.

(*d*) No.

(*e*) Further improvement in the methods of distribution is under consideration.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state what arrangements have been made by Government with regard to the supply of sugar in small quantities to small consumers outside controlled shops?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: I have already said that if 70 people would combine together among themselves, they could take a bag of sugar for their monthly requirements and distribute the sugar among themselves.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state, where it is not possible for 70 people to combine themselves, how the Hon'ble Minister proposes to meet the requirements of sugar to such consumers?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: In all possible ways—in the first place there are control shops, in the second place there are other shops which supply sugar to some people, Government shops and stores, and, if in spite of that, honourable members do not find sugar in the market——

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Arising out of (*c*), if I remember aright, the question is "sugar is available only in a few such controlled shops", will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if the Government have under contemplation any scheme for increasing the number of control shops and for making sugar available to shops in the general markets?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: We are doing our level best so far as the distribution of sugar is concerned to the people at large without throwing it about to facilitate black market operations. We can supply sugar to any number of shops, we can throw it on the market, but there will be no proper supervision and it is bound to go to the black market. We have got to see that the distribution is made in the proper quarters; and the general public are bound to suffer some inconvenience on that account. When rationing system will be introduced, sugar will also be rationed along with other articles.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Arising out of this supplementary question, will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state when the rationing scheme may be expected to work?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: As the honourable member will see, we are appointing 25 shops per week and this will cover a very large portion of Calcutta by the end of October next. As it is proposed to have this rationing scheme on a scientific and orderly scale right from the very beginning, I believe that there will be some delay. But by November rationing scheme will come into operation as a whole.

Mr. K. C. ROY CHOWDHURY: Is the Hon'ble Minister aware that the so-called supply stores cannot even supply rice to one-tenth of the population of the locality where they are situated and it has been a failure——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Mr. Ray Chowdhury: You are speaking of rice, but this question deals with sugar.

Mr. K. C. ROY CHOWDHURY: Sir, my question is about the proposed scheme of rationing in Calcutta. I want to point out that the preliminary steps show that it is rather a failure because——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order, you cannot discuss the principle of rationing of rice.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to tell us how he proposes to deal with the question of the supply of sugar through control shops when the distribution of rice through these shops has been a failure, as stated by Mr. Roy Chowdhury.

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: I do not agree that the distribution of rice has failed. I think that the honourable member who remarked that it has failed was talking without his brief and does not know what he was talking about.

Communal proportion among Supply Officers.

63. Khan Sahib NURUL AMIN: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Civil Supplies Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) the number of District Supply Officers in Bengal;

(*b*) the number of Subdivisional Supply Officers in Bengal; and

(*c*) the number of Muslims and Hindus amongst them?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: (*a*) Twenty-six.

(*b*) Eighty-five.

(*c*) (*i*) District Supply Officers—

14 Hindus.
11 Muslims.
1 other community (Christian).

(*ii*) Subdivisional Supply Officers—

41 Hindus.
44 Muslims.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if among these officers there is any one belonging to the Scheduled Castes?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: I am not aware if there are any belonging to the Scheduled Castes. If there are any, they are included among the Hindus.

Food Drive in Calcutta.

64. Mr. MUNCTURAM JAIPURIA: Will the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Civil Supplies Department be pleased to state—

(*a*) the specific purpose which the Government had in view in taking census on the 7th and the 8th August last in the districts of Howrah and Calcutta in connection with the Food Drive; and

(*b*) whether this purpose has been fulfilled?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: (*a*) To take a census of stock of foodgrains.

(*b*) Yes.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state if the object of the drive—the seizing of the surplus stocks—was, in addition to what he has stated, to distribute the stocks amongst the different controlled shops.

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: No, Sir.

Alhadj Khan Bahadur Shaikh MUHAMMAD JAN: Sir, I have a question, a very important question, regarding the price of wheat. Previously wheat or *atta* was selling at Rs. 16-8 per maund; now it has been reduced to Rs. 14. May I know, Sir, what has——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Khan Bahadur, there are several questions outstanding and yours is not the only important question.

Alhadj Khan Bahadur Shaikh MUHAMMAD JAN: Sir, the *atta* now being sold at Rs. 14 per maund is half *atta* and half *bajra*. So——

Mr. PRESIDENT: If you want to rise on a point of information, you may do so and if the Hon'ble Minister likes he may reply to your point of information.

Alhadj Khan Bahadur Shaikh MUHAMMAD JAN: Sir, the price of *atta* has been reduced from Rs. 16-8 to Rs. 14 but that is not pure *atta*. It consists of half *bajra* and half wheat. Test relief centres have been notified that henceforth they will be supplied with this sort of *atta* to be distributed among the poor people. Now, I want to ask whether this sort of mixture of half *bajra* and half wheat can be consumed by the people in this climate without detriment to their health. *Bajra* cannot be used even by the people of the Punjab which is the centre of *bajra*.

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: Sir, the premises of the honourable member are entirely incorrect.

Alhadj Khan Bahadur Shaikh MUHAMMAD JAN: In what respect?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: Sir, the *atta* which is being supplied by Government through the controlled shops,—nearly 40,000 maunds of *atta* we propose to put on the markets,—is the pure wheat product coming out from the mills not mixed with *bajra* at all, not even one per cent. of *bajra* is there.

Alhadj Khan Bahadur Shaikh MUHAMMAD JAN: Sir, I have received information——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. I cannot allow you to argue. You wanted information. You have got the information.

Point of information.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: On a point of information, Sir, I would ask for "order papers" from the Hon'ble the Home Minister with regard to the incident reported in the papers this morning about *lathi* charges made yesterday on certain destitute persons described as hunger-marchers, who were coming towards the Assembly.

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: Sir, I have not yet read today's papers which are said to have published the statement made by me in another place. But, Sir, very despicable attempts are being made to use these poor hunger-marchers for political purposes. They had been deliberately sent here for the purpose of staging a demonstration. I do not know whether the honourable members would like to have a demonstration staged here similar to what was done in United Provinces sometime back when a mob managed to enter the Legislative Chamber of the United Provinces and practically stopped the proceedings of the House. If the

honourable members are anxious to have similar scenes in future, I am ready to withdraw the ordinary police precaution from the Assembly and allow the demonstrators to come in the Chamber.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Sir, may I pursue the point a little further? Was the attempt of the police meant to prevent the demonstrators from coming into the House?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. There cannot be any supplementary question. You wanted information and the Hon'ble Minister has supplied you that information.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: But, Sir, further information may be required.

Mr. PRESIDENT: If you want to get clarified any point in the statement of the Hon'ble the Home Minister, I am prepared to give you the opportunity.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: My point is this: The Hon'ble Minister has said he tried to prevent the marchers from coming into the Assembly so that they might not disturb the proceedings of the House. But is it a fact that actual violence was used in this connection on these poor people? They were beaten and not merely cordoned off. There were actual assaults on them.

The Hon'ble Khwaja Sir NAZIMUDDIN: The reply may be had from the people who set these marchers on. They are entirely responsible and not we.

Mr. HUMAYUN KABIR: Are we to understand that those who organised these marchers beat them up?

Alhadj Khan Bahadur Shaikh MUHAMMAD JAN: On a point of information, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. No more information on this point.

Statement of action taken on Resolution.

The Hon'ble Mr. TAMIZUDDIN KHAN: In accordance with the provision of sub-rule (2) of rule 95 of the Bengal Legislative Council Procedure Rules, I have the honour to place for the information of the Council the following statement showing the action taken by Government on the resolution of Mr. Nur Ahmed, M.L.C., regarding the rapid spread of education among the Muslim population of Bengal that was passed by the Council on 6th November, 1942:—

"Government have not been oblivious of the need for the rapid spread of education among the Muslims in Bengal. As early as in 1931 they appointed a Committee with Khan Bahadur Maulvi M. A. Momin, M.L.C., as President to advise on what should be the policy of advancing Moslem education in Bengal. In 1938 they appointed another committee to advise on the improvement of the Madrasah education in the province. The

reports presented by these committees were voluminous documents. A Special Officer was therefore appointed to examine the reports and to make concrete suggestions for action to be taken on the proposals therein. The report of this Special Officer has been received. His recommendations involve very great expenditure both capital and recurring, and it is not possible for Government in the present emergency to undertake it. When these proposals have been considered and implemented by Government after the termination of the war, a long step will have been achieved towards attaining the objects of the resolution adopted by the Council".

Statement regarding supply of soft-coke in Calcutta.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: On a point of information, Sir. I would be glad to know when the proposed statement is forthcoming with regard to the soft-coke situation.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Yesterday Government promised to make a statement regarding the soft-coke situation. Are they prepared to do so?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: Sir, I cannot say off-hand what is the actual position, and I do not know exactly what the honourable member wants to mean by soft-coke situation?

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Sir, I put in a short-notice question with regard to that.

Mr. PRESIDENT: That short-notice question was not admitted.

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: Sir, I can repeat what the Coal Controller has said that for the present 25 wagons per day have been allotted to Calcutta and that he will try to increase the number by 10 wagons making it 35 per day. I have checked up the average of last fortnight and beginning from the 26th August, I find that the average arrival was 32 wagons per day from the Ondal side. I also arranged with the Coal Controller and the various railways that they would send us 25 wagons per day from the Azimgunj side, and the railways and the Coal Controller very kindly agreed to supply the wagons for us. The wagons came by a rather circuitous route from the coalfields *via* Kiul to Azimgunj and were transported from Azimgunj to the other side of the river to Nashipur Road and were thus brought to Calcutta. My object was by this means to supplement the soft-coke supplies in Calcutta. There were great difficulties at first but with the co-operation of all these gentlemen we were able to arrange the delivery of these wagons and for some time the supplies were made; but all on a sudden, I regret to have to state, other persons stepped in and these wagons were taken away and we are only getting 5 wagons out of 25, and the other 20 wagons have been taken by people who ought to have looked after themselves instead of encroaching on our supplies. I claim that owing to whatever you call it, ingenuity or otherwise, we were able to get these 25 wagons and Calcutta should have had the benefit of it. We have lodged a protest against the transfer of these wagons to other people who could easily make engagements for themselves

in other ways. I do consider that it is extremely unfair on the part of the other authorities to take away coal from Calcutta in this manner. One of the points raised by them is that "we have never had so much coal in Calcutta, namely, we never had so many as 60 or 70 wagons of coal in Calcutta per day before this even at the best of times". But then in those days coal consumption was supplemented by fuel wood consumption, but now owing to wagon difficulties we are not getting even fuel wood for consumption. We are trying to get fuel wood, however, from whatever sources we can, but as I have said the wagon difficulty is always there. Also, I have no hesitation in saying in this House that there is this real difficulty, for which the people of Calcutta have to pay, namely, that the merchants and others have got to pay for the wagons heavily before fuel can be brought to Calcutta. This is the position, Sir, with regard to coal and fuel. I think, however, that the system of coal distribution is being regularised and I believe that now the coal situation from the point of view of distribution is much better than before.

Mr. SACHINDRA NARAYAN SANYAL: On a point of information, Sir. Will the Hon'ble Minister please state what arrangements have been made with regard to the supply of coal to the mufassil?

The Hon'ble Mr. H. S. SUHRAWARDY: So far as the mufassil is concerned, I am afraid the supply has been cut down, because the Coal Controller proposes to supply only 5 wagons of coal per day to the mufassil which means 150 wagons only a month for the entire mufassil districts of Bengal. This I consider to be extremely inadequate. I have brought this to the notice of the Coal Controller but he says that he cannot do more.

The Bengal Vagrancy Bill, 1943.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The House will now take up the third reading of the Vagrancy Bill. Khan Bahadur Jalaluddin Ahmad.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi JALALUDDIN AHMAD: Sir, I beg to move that the Bengal Vagrancy Bill, 1943, as sent by the Legislative Assembly be passed——

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. The proper form should be "as settled in the Council", and not as "sent by the Assembly".

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi JALALUDDIN AHMAD: I beg your pardon, Sir. I beg to move that the Bengal Vagrancy Bill, 1943, as settled in the Council, be passed.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Motion moved: that the Bengal Vagrancy Bill, 1943, as settled in the Council, be passed.

Mr. NUR AHMED: Sir, I rise to whole-heartedly support the motion for the passing of the Bill. This Bill is no doubt a very useful and beneficient measure but in my humble opinion it is very badly drafted. It is vague and incomplete in many respects. I expected a much better Bill

from an eminent lawyer like the member who is in charge of it and not such an incomplete Bill. Sir, possibly he is carrying someone else's baby but the fact remains that he has adopted that child as his own. He had an opportunity to have it improved in the other House but that has not been done. On going through the clauses of the Bill I find that the definition of the term "vagrant" is too vague. Then, Sir, in the definition it has been said, "person not being of European extraction found asking for alms in any public place, or wandering about or remaining in any public place in such condition or manner as makes it likely that such person exists by asking for alms but does not include a person collecting money or asking for food or gifts for a prescribed purpose". In this definition the expression "public place" has been used. Now, Sir, if you compare this definition with the definition given in the Calcutta Police Act, section 70, the Suburban Police Act, section 40, and the Punjab Municipal Act, section 51, you will find that there is a difference. In those Acts the definition contains words "public streets". So there is a lacuna: because from the definition of this Bill, "public streets" have been omitted. I find from the definition, as given in the Calcutta Police Act, section 3, sub-section 17, that the term "public place" has been defined as the river bank or warehouse or space, *i.e.*, place where the public have access to bathe or to take water. So the definition in this Bill excludes public streets and other places such as verandah of a building. So in this sense the definition is defective, because it leaves out streets, verandahs or shops where generally beggars live and ask for alms. In that view of the matter, there will be some difficulty in working this Bill unless the definition is revised or modified. There is another point and this is that begging has not been altogether prohibited by the provisions of this Bill. Only employment of any person for the purpose of begging has been made a punishable offence; but begging in the public streets and elsewhere has not been made punishable.

In the Punjab Municipal Act and in the Calcutta Police Act there are provisions for this; but in the Calcutta Police Act it is more limited. It gives power to the police to get a beggar convicted for one month only. I think that it will not serve the purpose of this Bill. There is another fact and that is that in the Bill although the expression "police officer" has been used, there is no definition of the term "Police officer". Sir, anybody, even a constable can be said to be a police officer. If that is so, the power given by this Act may be misused to the great hardship of these poor people. Some unscrupulous constable may use this power for exacting money from these very unfortunate human beings. The words "police officer" should have been fully defined and a police officer not below the rank of a head constable should have been given this power.

There is another defect in this Bill. In this Bill there is no beneficial provision as is found in the Bengal Children Act and other similar Acts. It is stated in the Bill that vagrants should be sent to the Vagrancy Homes; but it is not stated how they would be treated there, what benefit they would derive there and what would be done to improve their hard lot while they would be detained there. This is a most significant omission. We

expected a much improved and a more complete Bill from a lawyer of the eminence of the Hon'ble Minister in charge of this Bill. Taking all the provisions of the Bill into consideration, we find that the Bill does not give large powers to the Government to give full benefit to this class of people. The sole purpose of this Bill is to remove the beggars from the streets of Calcutta. Begging has not been made punishable by this Bill. The sole purpose of this Bill seems to be to keep the streets of Calcutta clean and healthy but this purpose would be frustrated if begging is not prohibited altogether.

As the Bill has been conceived as a war measure, there are some lacunæ in it to which I have drawn the attention of the Hon'ble Minister. I think he will try to improve the Bill in the way I have suggested or in any other way he thinks best.

With these few words, I support the third reading of the Bill.

Mr. C. E. CLARKE: Mr. President, Sir, in welcoming the passing of this measure coment need only be brief. At a time when Bengal is passing through her darkest hour, it is highly satisfactory that a permanent and, we trust, progressive step has at last been taken towards the solution of a problem which for a number of years has been an outstanding disgrace in the First City of this sub-continent.

There is ample evidence on record in this city that the subject is one which has engaged the attention of many civic-minded bodies over a long period and it is fitting to pay tribute to the Rotary Club in Calcutta which has since 1934 made repeated and strenuous efforts to direct the attention of Government to the evils of a state of affairs that apparently had to be tolerated because it could only be removed by Provincial legislation. Even earlier, nearly 20 years ago, other Associations with very considerable energy took up this subject with the Corporation officials. That Government has, at last, taken action is, however, due to the problem becoming acute owing to war conditions in Calcutta. Sir, we strongly express the hope that the Bengal Vagrancy Bill will be applied with the fullest possible vigour, particularly as we find that although full powers of operation have existed for some months conditions in the main streets of this city do not yet show any signs of improvement.

It has to be admitted that the position has been complicated by the influx into Calcutta of destitute people in search for food. Although the provisions of the Bill fully apply to these people, this part of the problem is, we now understand, being dealt with under a separate scheme. This scheme is quite simple in that it provides for the collection of these people in selected centres in Calcutta and thereafter their evacuation to relief camps outside Calcutta. Progress under this scheme appears, however, to be very disappointing and we would urge upon Government the necessity of taking more vigorous action for the collection and evacuation of these destitute people. We understand that full arrangements have been made for food, shelter and sanitation for them in the relief camps, and we think it most unsatisfactory that there should be this delay in organising the collection

and transport of the destitute to these camps. The situation appears to require an organised campaign for 3 or 4 days, in which, if necessary, the services of non-official relief organisations, the A. R. P. personnel and Civic Guards should be used in removing destitutes from the streets——

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: On a point of order, Sir. Is the honourable member entitled to speak of the destitutes of Calcutta and confuse them with the vagrants dealt with in this Bill?

Mr. PRESIDENT: Why not?

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: They do not fall under the definition of vagrants.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Speaking generally on the question he can certainly refer to it.

Mr. C. E. CLARKE: Meanwhile, there is the Mahalandi project. We hope that there will be no further delay in the completion of the Homes at Mahalandi. We understand that this site was acquired as far back as August 1942 and it seems to us that the delay in completing the homes cannot be entirely explained away by the lack of building materials or coal, as was at one time suggested. Can we, Sir, be given some indications now as to when the Homes will be ready for use and also will Government be pleased to say if they have satisfied themselves in regard to the accommodation that will be required for the ever-increasing number of vagrants and that the homes will, in fact, be large enough for the purpose? Our object in drawing attention to these points is to emphasise our concern, lest the measure should drift into "cold storage" or become inoperative for want of adequate preparations, foresight and plans for expansion. Having achieved so much, this would be a calamity. We also express a hope that the activities of Government will not be limited to the pages of this Bill but will embrance expansion for additional Homes suitably equipped as and when the need arises. Touching on the point of externment, Sir, the Homes at Mahalandi will, we understand, only be able to hold a limited number of, say, 5,000, vagrants, and in our opinion the success of this Bill will depend in a large measure upon Government strictly enforcing the provisions for externment of new vagrants coming into Calcutta from outside the Province. The problem will not be solved if Government, after removing the bulk of the vagrants to the Homes at Mahalandi, allow new vagrants from other areas again to collect in Calcutta. We shall be glad to know what arrangements Government actually propose to make under clause 10 of the Bill for the repatriation of new vagrants outside the Province. In particular, we would like to know if definite arrangements have been made with the railways with regard to this matter.

Sir, in urging the strongest possible steps to rid our streets of the menace to the health and vitality of our over-worked and over-crowded city, we are not actuated by motives that merely put these people out of sight. The statement of objects and reasons for the Bill is admirable in its clarity and we trust that every effort will be made to carry them through to complete fulfilment.

Concluding, Sir, we add our sincere congratulations for the expeditious manner in which the Hon'ble Minister is going to convert an Ordinance into an Act which cannot be but beneficial to Bengal, particularly to the larger cities.

Mr. HARIDAS MAZUMDAR: Sir, I rise to support this measure which is now going to be passed into an Act. This is a healthy social welfare measure and as such we whole-heartedly support it. As regards the defects and shortcomings of the Bill, I fully associate with what has fallen from my honourable friend Mr. Nur Ahmed. I do not like to enter into the details just at present, because we can wait and see the operation of this measure and the defects and lacunæ that may be discovered in course of the working of the Act we shall have ample time to amend them if and when necessary. But there is one thing which I should point out and which has also been pointed out by the last speaker that it must not be consigned to the dust and silence of the upper shelf, particularly in view of the fact that healthy social legislations have not in the past been acted upon for want of funds. They have practically become dead-letter legislations, and I hope and trust that the Hon'ble Minister, as soon as the assent of His Excellency is obtained, will put this into operation and see that work is commenced at once in right earnest.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Sir, I desire to associate myself with what has fallen from the previous speakers. The Vagrancy Bill is a welcome measure dealing as it does with the question of vagrants. But, Sir, what I have heard from my honourable friend, Mr. Clarke, is not clear to me. It will be better if the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Bill will explain the intention of the Bill. Is it the intention of the Government to apply the provisions of the Bill to these temporary destitutes who had to leave their hearths and homes for seeking food in this city? It is never the intention of this Bill to deal with these temporary destitutes; because it will appear from section 7 of the Bill that as soon as a vagrant is received by any police officer he has to be brought before a Special Magistrate under section 6 and such Special Magistrate shall make a summary inquiry in the prescribed manner and shall record a declaration that he is a vagrant and send him to the Vagrants' Home. What is proposed by Mr. Clarke is that these destitutes now in Calcutta would be gathered together in certain places by the A. R. P. officers and then arrangements should be made to transport them to some other place outside Calcutta. That, Sir, is a proposal which is never in the contemplation of this Bill. What is the intention of this Bill? The intention of the Bill is that permanent vagrants who stay in Calcutta should be dealt with under the provisions of this Bill. Now, while I agree with the principles of the Bill as well as with its provisions, I desire to point out that there are certain defects in it which may very well be remedied by the rule-making power of the Government. The definition of a "vagrant" as given in the Bill is: "a person not being of European extraction found asking for alms in any public place, or wandering about or remaining in any public place in such condition or manner as makes it likely that such person exists by asking for alms but does not include a person collecting money or asking for food or gifts for a prescribed

purpose". As the Minister in charge of the Bill is a devout Muslim of the orthodox type, he should please consider one point, namely, as to whether by the rule-making powers of Government it would not be possible to save from the clutches of the police such persons as devout Muslim *fakirs*, Hindu *fakirs* and Hindu *sadhus* and *sannyasis* who come and stay in Calcutta but who are not really vagrants. The definition, however, is so wide that it covers those persons also, and they may also be dragged to the *thana* and put to very great inconvenience. I ask whether by the rule-making powers of Government the Hon'ble Minister may not be able to exclude this class of persons from the operation of the "definition" clause. Another thing, Sir. The war situation has made a very serious encroachment upon the financial means of gentlemen with regard to everything, and specially with regard to their wearing apparel. I am speaking of the poor middle class *bhadralogs* who sometimes have to appear in tattered clothes and walk about the streets, may be, quite absent-mindedly, thinking of particular subjects. Any police officer may, under the provisions of this clause, seize such gentlemen and drag them to vagrants' home. Therefore, it is necessary that particular care should be taken with regard to the definition of the term "Police officer". In section 6 it is stated that any police officer authorised in this behalf by the Commissioner of Police in Calcutta and by the District Magistrate elsewhere may require any person who is apparently,—mark the word, Sir, it is only 'apparently'—a vagrant to accompany him or any other police officer to appear before a Special Magistrate. Now, Sir, is this police officer to be a mere constable or is it meant that he will be a police officer not below the rank of a sub-inspector of Police? It is necessary for me to know whether the definition of the word police officer includes a constable also. If you give this power to any ordinary constable, it will leave the door wide open to bribery. A constable may seize any person and taking him to be a vagrant drag him to the Magistrate and the supposed vagrant may pay the constable something and get off. That is a very dangerous thing. So I would draw your attention to the fact that attention should be paid to the definition of the word "police officer," as to whether it does include a constable. If it does, then I would protest saying that it would leave the door open to bribery, as I have already said. Not that I say that a sub-inspector of police is above bribery, but then he has got a better power of discrimination than an ordinary police constable. If you mean to say that these police officers should be below the rank of a sub-inspector of police, then you must leave some directions by the rules that penalties may be imposed on the police wrongly dragging a man to the *thana* or anywhere. By the rule-making powers of Government, which are very wide, I would again ask the Hon'ble Minister if it is not possible for him to see that this police officer be not below the rank of a sub-inspector. Then, Sir, there is the provision in respect of the examination of a vagrant by doctors. Sub-section 1 of section 8, says "* * * he shall forthwith be sent in the manner prescribed to the nearest receiving centre and there handed over to the custody of the officer in charge in such receiving centre, and such vagrant shall be detained in such receiving centre until he is sent

therefrom to a vagrants' home * * *", and then, Sir, after this procedure he will be subjected to medical examination. I would draw the attention of the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Bill in this connection that for the purpose of medical examination he should see to it that women vagrants are not examined by male doctors. Arrangements should be made so that female vagrants may be examined by female doctors and the reports thereafter may be given, if necessary, to a higher medical officer. In view of the further fact that the refusal to submit to medical examination will entail punishment, I would request the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Bill to see that provision is made in the rule-making power that female vagrants will be examined by female doctors. Another point to which I would draw the attention of the Hon'ble Minister is with regard to section 3. This section deals with the Vagrancy Advisory Board. What I would suggest is that in constituting the Advisory Board regard should be had to the proper representation of the members of both the Houses on the Board. Then, Sir, I would suggest further that by the rule-making power of Government it should be made clear what would be the duties and functions of that Board. I desire particularly to draw the attention of the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Bill to section 7 under which the Special Magistrate has been given power. It is said there that the Special Magistrate shall declare whether a person is vagrant or not and his decision is final. But the Board has also been entrusted with the duties under sub-section 4 of section 3 of looking into the proper administration of the Act. So the Advisory Board should be empowered to revise the declarations of the Special Magistrate. This is a thing which should be considered. If the Advisory Board comes to the finding in the case of any vagrant that the declaration has not been correct, it will be within the power of the Advisory Board to recommend to the Government to revise the decision of the Special Magistrate. That is a thing which should be looked into. With these words, I extend my support to the provisions of this Bill and wish it God-speed in its journey.

Mr. K. C. ROY CHOWDHURY: Sir, I have already expressed my views about the urgent necessity of a measure of this kind when this Bill was introduced. I have now to express my gratitude to the framers of the Bill for the excellent provisions incorporated in it. But I would like the Hon'ble Minister to elucidate some matters relating to clause 3 regarding the appointment of a Vagrancy Advisory Board. I do hope that when the appointments are made he will take into consideration the claims of several organisations in Calcutta and outside which are dealing with the problem of beggars, for example, the District Charitable Society, the Ramkrishna Mission, and I am sure there are many similar institutions among the Muslims; there is also the Buddhist organisation, the Refuge—these are the organisations which have got first-hand information about beggars and vagrants. I hope the Hon'ble Minister will see that only M.L.A's. and M.L.C's. are not appointed to this Board just for the purpose of getting their co-operation. The Government need not also write to the Bengal National Chamber or other Chambers of trade and commerce for appointments to this Board. Their nominees are too busy and will not attend.

I have some personal experience regarding these boards. I was elected as a member of the Leper Asylum which received big grants from the Calcutta Corporation and other members were also appointed to that committee. But because it was a leper asylum and because it was situated at Gobra, some distance from the city of Calcutta, not a single member attended any meeting of the committee. Because the members were afraid of infection from the lepers and also because it was an out of the way place not a single member cared to attend the meeting. I hope Government will take into consideration the competence of the members they will appoint. (Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: What are your suggestions?) Let the Minister have his own way. (Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: What are your specific suggestions?) Government should take members from the District Charitable Societies and similar organisations interested in the poor. (Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: What sort of members you desire?) According to sub-clause (*3*) of section 3, the Board is to advise on the administration of this Act. I am sure the Board should have some power regarding the expansion of the scope of the definition of the term "Vagrants". There may be religious beggars, Hindus, Muslims or Buddhists. In fact, Buddhism preaches *Vikshuism*, that means a person should carry in his hand begging bowls. (Khan Sahib ABUL QUASEM: Do you want to suppress that religion?) There are *Fakirs*. There are Hindu *Sannyasis* and there are some who are neither Hindus nor Muhammadans. So the Advisory Board should have some powers, some definite powers and not vague powers, to expand the definition of the term "Vagrants" so as not to include people who by their spiritual creed are beggars. People in the United Provinces, the Punjab and Hardwar are proud of begging. They do it according to their religious injunction. Many *Sannyasis* come to Calcutta during the Gangasagar *mela* who are not vagrants. In Kumbh *mela*, one meets thousands of *Sannyasis* who are not vagrants but beg. During the Gangasagar *mela* in December many *Sadhus* come here and sit near the river-side between the Howrah Bridge and Nimtolla Ghat. Supposing a police officer goes there and arrests some of them at the instigation of malicious people and haul them up before a Magistrate. Then those *Sannyasis* will be put to great trouble. So, I say that the members to the Advisory Board should be selected in a way so that they may tender good advice to the Government regarding the proper administration of this Bill.

With these few words, I support the Bill.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi JALALUDDIN AHMAD: Mr. President, Sir, I thank the members of the House for the reception they have accorded to this non-controversial measure and also for the valuable suggestions which have been made by several members in regard to the provisions of this Bill. I may point out that this Bill was prepared after discussion with various sections of the public who were interested in the problem by my predecessor in office during the last Ministry. I myself gave anxious consideration to the different clauses of the Bill. In clause 28 we have provided for the manner in which the vagrants should

be examined, the manner in which the Advisory Board should be constituted, and the manner in which the provisions of the Bill should be carried out. When necessity arises, provision will be made for dealing with the great influx of beggars and destitutes from the mufassil. The Bill contains 29 clauses and it makes provision for collection of these vagrants, for their food, shelter, clothing, for their employment and also for their discharge by the Controller when he is satisfied that they will no longer resort to vagrancy. There is also provision for punishment or penalties for the offenders. Sir, suggestions have been made that there are lacunæ in this Bill. As Bill has not yet been worked and is in the nature of an experiment in Bengal, in the course of the working of the Bill if any defect is found it can be amended. A suggestion has been given by Mr. Nur Ahmed with regard to the definition of the term "vagrant". I do not think there is much room for improvement in this definition. It is wide enough and it excludes those persons who are really wanderers. It does not include a person collecting money or asking for food or gifts for a prescribed purpose. It will exclude those charitable institutions whose object is to collect money for carrying out the objects of those institutions. There are institutions in Bombay, I know, where little children are put to torture, they are even subjected to burns to make them cry so as to excite pity in the minds of the people. In Calcutta I have found institutions of professional beggars where children are trained in the art of begging by making sores on their bodies just to excite pity. All this must be stopped in Bengal. I admit that the Muslims and Hindus think it their religious duty to give alms rather indiscriminately and sometimes they condemn the Westerners that they do not encourage individual charity but go in only for collective charity. I think there is some sense in what the Westerners do. We do sometimes practise indiscriminate charity and that encourages professional vagrancy. Personally speaking, I think this Vagrancy Bill is a very welcome measure and the defects which may be found in its actual working will be remedied as far as possible by the rules. Many honourable members have pointed out that the term "Police Officer" in clause 6 of the Bill has not been defined. In this connection, I would like to refer my friends to the expression "any police officer authorised by the Commissioner of Police in Calcutta and by the District Magistrate elsewhere". So, it will be for the Commissioner of Police in Calcutta to see what sort of police officer he should employ for this purpose. We should not lay it down as to whether he should be a sub-inspector of police or an assistant sub-inspector of police or an ordinary constable. I may say without any disrespect to the members of the House that a sub-inspector of police is no more trustworthy than an ordinary constable. Besides, honourable members will realise that the Commissioner of Police may not have many sub-inspectors of police under him to be entrusted with this business; so he has got to employ other police officers of a lower rank. In the Criminal Procedure Code also it will be found that an ordinary constable may get hold of a man and take him to the thana, and there is a provision that he has to be brought before the Magistrate within 24 hours or as early as possible. Here also, we have laid down that

the supposed vagrant should be brought before a Special Magistrate as soon as possible. So, there is no harm in laying down a provision like this—that any police officer authorised by the Commissioner of Police or District Magistrate may do this work. If a District Magistrate in a particular place thinks that he will authorise an assistant sub-inspector of police or a constable to do this job, then he can do so: we do not propose to limit his power in a cast-iron frame. With regard to a constable being employed in this behalf, I may mention that there is no danger of a vagrant greasing his fingers as he is not likely to have much in his possession for that purpose; and if the constable has got hold of a man who has got something he can certainly stand up before the Special Magistrate and protest that he is not a vagrant. The intention is that it is only the vagrant who is to be taken; we have no other intention under this Bill.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Is it your intention to apply this Bill to the destitutes now in Calcutta?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi JALALUDDIN AHMAD: It might be; but we have at present got provision for only one thousand beggars and they will be carried to Mahalandi where there is accommodation for 7,000 men. So this Act will not apply to destitutes as such, because they are to be dealt with by the Revenue Department which is entrusted with providing relief. Of course, it is pertinent for honourable members to note that there is very little difference——

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Will the Hon'ble Minister please repeat his last sentence? Did he use the term "impertinent"?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi JALALUDDIN AHMAD: No, no. I said that it was pertinent for honourable members to note that there was very little difference——

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: I am sorry I could not catch you properly.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi JALALUDDIN AHMAD: That there was very little difference between the destitutes and the vagrants. I may submit that it is not the policy of the Controller of this Department to take every destitute who cannot be provided somewhere else and moreover a destitute is not always a vagrant. We propose to deal only with the professional vagrants under this Bill. So I hope these observations will satisfy my friends who have spoken on this point. There is one provision with regard to externment to which one of the honourable members has referred. Then one of the members said that unless such provision for externment is there, vagrants from mufassil will come and go on staying here. I would refer him to section 10 in which it is stated that a vagrant should have to be in the area for more than a year. So no person will be treated as a vagrant unless he is born or has been there for more than a year. Foreigners will be externed if they do not really belong to Calcutta. Some members have pointed out that particular care should be taken in regard to the provision for the medical examination of female

vagrants. It is provided in clause 8, "medically examine the vagrant in the manner prescribed". I may assure the House that it will be prescribed to the satisfaction of the members. I would further refer the honourable members to clause 14 in this connection. It is provided there that a female vagrant shall be searched by a female only and with due regard to decency. So at the time of medical examination there would be a female present even if a female doctor is not available. It may not be possible to have so many female doctors; but there is provision that a female will be present at the time of medical examination——

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: May I draw the attention of the Hon'ble Minister that section 14 deals with search of vagrants and it has nothing to do with medical examination?

Mr. PRESIDENT: I think you should allow the Hon'ble Minister to reply: You had your say.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi JALALUDDIN AHMAD: Mr. President, I am sorry the honourable member has not followed what I said. I said that we have been meticulously careful in making the provisions. But it will not be possible in every case to have a female vagrant examined by a female doctor. We have said "medically examined in the prescribed manner". This shows that every care would be taken to have it done decently. With regard to the suggestion for employing only female doctors, I may point out that Bengal does not produce a sufficient number of female doctors to deal with all the female vagrants so far as their medical examination is concerned.

Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: I think there are enough female doctors for dealing with vagrants in Calcutta.

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulvi JALALUDDIN AHMAD: I do not think there are sufficient female doctors in Calcutta to deal with all the female vagrants. But I can assure my honourable friend that this medical examination will be done with decency. (Mr. LALIT CHANDRA DAS: Yes, decency is what is required.) Clause 10 provides that all vagrants who are not born or has not been continuously resident in the area for more than one year will be externed from Calcutta, and that only beggars of Calcutta will come under the Act.

With regard to vagrants' home, I may say that these vagrants will be taken to Mahalandi and after their training there when it is found that that they have become fit for employment and after employment has been obtained for such vagrants by the Controller, he has power to discharge them.

Another suggestion has been made that the Advisory Board should sit in judgment over the Special Magistrate's decision. That proposition cannot be accepted. The functions of the Advisory Board will be quite different. The vagrants will be dealt with by the Special Magistrate summarily and if it is done in a circuitous way, as suggested by the honourable member, it will not serve the purpose of the Bill.

I am thankful to Mr. Clarke for the reception he has given to this Bill. With regard to his suggestion that the measure should not be left in cold storage, I can assure him that the Government is very serious about putting this Bill into operation extensively. The Bill provides for full operation in Calcutta at once; it is only confined to Calcutta at present. But there is provision in this Bill for extending its operation outside Calcutta. With these words, I thank the honourable members of the House for supporting the Bill unanimously.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The question before the House is: that the Bengal Vagrancy Bill, 1943, as settled in Council, be passed.

(The motion was agreed to.)

Prorogation.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, order. I have it in command from His Excellency the Governor that the Bengal Legislative Council do now stand prorogued.

Members Absent.

The following members were absent from the meeting held on the 28th September, 1943:—

(1) Khan Bahadur Naziruddin Ahmad.
(2) Rai Bahadur Keshab Chandra Banerjee.
(3) Mr. Bankim Chandra Datta.
(4) Mr. Kamini Kumar Dutta.
(5) Mr. Mohamed Hossain.
(6) Mr. M. R. Jaipuria.
(7) Maulana Muhammad Akrum Khan.
(8) Mr. J. McFarlane.
(9) Mr. Nagendra Nath Moholanabish.
(10) Mr. Naresh Nath Mookerjee.
(11) Mr. R. S. Purssell.
(12) Khan Bahadur Muklesur Rahaman
(13) Khan Bahadur Kazi Abdur Rashid.
(14) Rai Sahib Jogendra Nath Ray.

APPENDIX.

Authorised English translations of the Bengali and Hindi Speeches delivered in the Bengal Legislative Council.

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Discussion of the Budget for 1943-44.

(Speech delivered on 21st September, 1943.)

Mr. MOAZZEMALI CHAUDHURY: Mr. President, Sir, discussion about the Budget must be made within ten minutes; so without making any preface, I would say one or two things that I have got to say. For the last seven years we have been discussing the Budget every year. During these seven years we have seen the activities of three Ministries—Fazlul Huq-Nazimuddin, Fazlul-Syama Prosad and Nazimuddin-Goswami Ministries. We have noticed that on the head of Test Relief some 2 lakhs of rupees are spent every year. It so happens that in some years the figure goes much beyond lakhs to the neighbourhood of crores. It is a matter of great regret and shame also that work of the test relief is not carried on in accordance with any "Planned Scheme". There is no doubt that all this money, at least a major portion of the sum, if not the whole, is wasted. Personally I know that for want of any scheme generally test relief work is started at a time in the year when, before the work is half finished, it has got to be stopped and the distribution of the money closed because, in drawing up the scheme, flood comes in; or on account of the work having been half done, we cannot get the fruit of the work. In most cases it is found that the money for the test relief is spent on removing *aram* and other kinds of jungles and weeds. Crores of rupees are thus wasted year after year, yet Government pays no attention to the matter. The waste of these crores of rupees may be stopped if we start work with a big scheme for the construction of inter-district roads and canals; and when any money is spent on account of test relief in any district, the sum should be spent in accordance with the scheme. If work can be started in this way, waste of crores of rupees may be stopped and it is possible to carry on the work smoothly. I am afraid one of the great wants of the country is the want of roads and canals or irrigation arrangement. It may soon be removed. Secondly, as regards food and the food problem. Today we are all face to face with a serious danger. Every member of this Legislature has been discussing this matter quite deeply. I should like to say a word or two regarding this subject. The problem which today confronts us—the manner in which Government is going to solve this problem—I think that if they have themselves understood it, they have failed to proceed with the work with courage in the manner which they themselves deem fit; to work with half-hearted measures was not well advised. If the problem is to be solved, drastic action must be taken; such half-hearted measures will not do. I may refer to one or two cases. The thing is—it is admitted on all hands and everybody knows it that Government, if it so chooses—and it was proved in the past that a terrorist or a criminal—Government police never abused their powers in detecting a terrorist or a criminal wherever he might be, whether on hills or in jungles or in rivers,—wherever he

might have concealed himself;—if it is possible to trace out one man out of India,—I am not prepared to believe that Government or police officers are unable to trace out lakhs of maunds of rice or foodgrains. If they are sincerely willing to find out (rice), they can easily do so. That is my notion. And today we want to know why Government should not be able to do so. Foodgrains are not certainly a thing like a thousand rupee note which can be carried on one's person. Foodgrains have been kept in concealment somewhere or other. It does not seem impossible to find them out. Serious efforts are not made. If it is declared from today that every Police Commissioner and Government officer should find out rice within fifteen days in their respective areas and should also see whether any hoarded rice has been kept concealed;—if any proof is forthcoming to show that after that fifteen days any concealed commodity was in his area or any commodity had been found out after that period, that police officer or Government servant, in whose area such hoarded goods would be found, should be summarily dismissed. If declaration is made in this strain I believe that whatever may be hoarded in Bengal, wherever it be, would be unearthed. I think the movement which the Opposition in the Legislature have started is being conducted along a mistaken path. Taking advantage of this movement all the capitalists and profiteers have today become bold enough to conceal all their commodities. This perhaps they themselves are unable to understand. Their duty is not done by simply attacking Government; they should co-operate. For we see today that it will not do only to oppose Government, in view of the severe distress that is prevailing in the country. By co-operating with them (Government) we must try to arrive at a real solution of the problem. I am not inclined to believe that there is no rice in the country. From the day on which the Ordinance was issued—from that day all rice disappeared from the country; is it believable? Till the day preceding it there was rice in the market. At hundreds and thousands and lakhs of shops rice was available till the preceding day. How is it that those who have been engaged in business and trade for generations had all their business stopped? Are we to think that they had no stock? Stocks they have which must only be found out and they punished. We think that all these stockists who are hoarders too are the principal enemies of the country;—they should be awarded punishment not less than what is awarded to murderers. They would not be properly punished even if they are hanged. It is in consequence of their activities that such wailings have arisen all over the country and death-rate is daily mounting up. I should like to draw Government's attention to another side; if they think that their point will be achieved, if they only succeed in securing the support of that number of members necessary for retaining their Ministership and that they need not look to anybody else and need not take the advice or suggestion of others, they would be highly mistaken. If the Opposition offer constructive suggestion, they should, I think, accept it. On this point I may also say that Government is today opening new shops—Government controlled shops. Because the public had some grievances in regard to the previous controlled shops, Government itself is now opening these shops. Regarding this matter I should like to

say what I know personally. In these Government shops within this time all these things have been found—about one shop I know—the manner in which rice was weighed and sold—in a tin box in the course of ten days, made it possible that within fifteen days some five maunds of rice were in surplus. And this rice was not certainly deposited back with Government. About this I am quite certain. If such things happen at shops conducted by Government servants and under Government control, that is indeed very shameful. Let me hope Government will immediately hold enquiries about this matter; and what Khan Bahadur Momin has said is the most important thing, namely, if corruption and bribery cannot be removed from Government arrangements I don't think that any progress can be made in any direction. Allegations have been heard against everybody from the Minister down to the I.C.S. Secretary. In order that such things might not happen in future it is necessary that all of us should make efforts in an organised manner; it should be the object of every party, be it Congress or League, that bribery and corruption is made a thing of the past. If in doing this a Government is to be pulled down, we should not lag behind. Those who will be able to do so will serve the country and try for the good of the country.

(Speech delivered on 21st September, 1943.)

Mr. MUNGTURAM JAIPURIA: Mr. President, Sir, the first thing remarkable in the Budget Estimates for this year that have been presented to us is that the Government anticipate a deficit of 7 crores and 36 lakhs this year. We should also bear in mind that the figures of the expenditure for the rationing scheme which the Government intend to introduce have not been included in this deficit. The Hon'ble Finance Minister himself has admitted that such a huge deficit has never occurred in the Bengal Budget. Therefore it is essential for us to see whether this deficit is unavoidable and whether the food problem in Bengal would be solved through this deficit.

On casting a glance at the terrible hardship and horrible misery which the people of the province of Bengal have to suffer for want of food it becomes apparent that like the past Ministry the present Ministry also has failed to solve the food problem. At the time when the present Ministry accepted office it held out big assurances to the distressed people of Bengal and promised that they would control the situation very soon. In fact, it took upon itself this burden voluntarily just with a view to solving this problem. But so far no result has ensued. In the beginning our Hon'ble Minister for Civil Supplies had said that the shortage of foodgrains was due to hoarding. But after the food drive in Calcutta and Howrah he himself was obliged to admit that no one had any excessive hoarding. But so far as public are concerned, they thought before also, and think even now, that every one has no hoarding. Those who have, the Government have either no knowledge about them or the selfish big guns of the Government do not want to tell the public about them.

The people of Bengal have a right to know whether or not the sum earmarked in the Budget for solving the food problem will be properly used.

The benefit of the expenses which the Government have incurred so far does not appear to have gone to the people but to only a handful of people. It is learnt from the papers that thousands of maunds of foodgrains are coming into Bengal from outside every day. But it does not appear as to where it is going. Ever since the Government fixed the price of rice it has become difficult even to obtain rice in the market. The same is the case with wheat. Well may *atta* be obtained after a good deal of effort, but wheat cannot be obtained. The hardships of those who are accustomed to purchase wheat and get it ground have greatly increased. The more are the Government trying, the more is the food problem becoming difficult. The present Ministry has appointed some members of the Muslim League and one or two Europeans as their agents to purchase foodgrains outside and to import them into Bengal. But these agents do not mind the interests of the people or of the Government but their own interests. The Government do nothing in spite of knowing this. On the contrary, they only pat their agents on the back. They are themselves profiteering. For example, just take the case of purchase of wheat in the Punjab. Have the Government any reply to the charge of profiteering levelled against them by Mr. Baldeo Singh, a Punjab Minister? The Government policy in this connection appears to be defective somewhere. Up till 30th May the Bengal Government used to charge at Rs. 11-8 per maund as the price of wheat from the mill-owners and caused *atta* to be sold in the market at Rs. 14-8. From 1st June, the Government began to charge Rs. 15-8 per maund as price of wheat from mills and caused *atta* to be sold at Rs. 19. Thereafter from August 4, the Government began to supply wheat to the mills at the rate of Rs. 14-4 per maund, reducing the previous price by Rs. 1-4 and caused *atta* to be sold at Rs. 16-8. Now since September 20, the Government have fixed the price of wheat at Rs. 12-12 and the price of *atta* at Rs. 14. What is the meaning of this continuous changes? When the Government were charging Rs. 11-8 as price of wheat in May, what was the reason for their charging Rs. 15-8 in June? What was the necessity of making this profit which the Bengal Government have made on wheat? And then what was the necessity of paying such a high milling charge to the mill-owners and what is the reason of reducing it now? Is it true that the Government have appointed some members of the Muslim League as their agents for purchasing *atta* from Punjab who used to purchase *atta* at Rs. 12-4 per maund, Calcutta delivery, and to sell it in the market at Rs. 19-8 per maund and it is with a view to maintaining the unbounded profit of those very people that the Government paid such high charges to the mills also. There is no use in keeping the public in the dark in regard to all these things. The people of Bengal insist upon knowing as to how the sum of three and a half crores of rupees which the Government have earmarked in this Budget of theirs for the arrangement of purchase and sale of foodgrains will be utilised? Is that for the benefit of a number of individuals in this very manner? The inference that follows from this is that if the Government desire, food may be supplied to the people at cheap rates without taking delivery of *atta* (?) worth a single pice. The Government should consult all the chambers, trade associations, relief societies of Calcutta and

the public food committees of the province and secure their co-operation in their work. So far as I understand, if the Government desire, these organisations will become prepared to take in their hands the arrangements for the purchase of foodgrains and their proper distribution also. The Government should place before the House all these things concisely and prove that they really stand in need of presenting such a huge deficit. I say to Government with emphasis that they should tell the members of the House what quantity of goods, at what places, on what dates and at what prices have Ispahanis, Shaw Wallace and their other agents purchased, what is the average of those prices and then at what price the Government have resold that commodity to the people. They should also point out how and through whom the Government have got this commodity sold and what is the present stock of each commodity with the Government.

The fun of the thing is that the Bengal Government have been purchasing goods incessantly. Their agents have been bringing to Bengal the surplus purchased in all the provinces. But, still the shortage of food throughout Bengal remains intact. Almost all the people have to purchase foodgrains in the black market and they do not get commodities according to their requirements in spite of paying the demanded price. The Government have achieved no success whatever in putting an end to the black market. In this year's Budget an increased expenditure of 31 lakhs has been anticipated for the Civil Supplies Department. Cannot the Government avoid this expenditure? If, the work of purchasing and selling foodgrains is entrusted to the public organisations of this place, this useless expenditure by the Government will be saved and at the same time the people will be able to get foodgrains at the controlled rates. Besides a provision of 3 crores and 52 lakhs has been made for the relief of the famine-stricken people. In my opinion if the Government employ this amount to relief work through non-official organisations, it will give considerable relief. There is no hope of people being benefited to the same extent if the arrangement is made by the Government direct. Those who are aware of the conditions obtaining in Bengal know that a good arrangement neither for feeding the destitute nor for their treatment and supervision has been made by the Government. People die in agony under the stress of hunger and for want of medicines. Their dead bodies remain lying on the streets. For two or three days the *post mortem* on these dead bodies continues, then they remain lying at burning ghats for eight or ten hours. As a result of this, there is great apprehension of terrible diseases spreading in Calcutta. The Government have not so far been able to make any proper provision for the starving homeless. Finally, I want to say that the province of Bengal is passing through abnormal difficulty today. At the present moment the burden for the protection of the people and their lives rests on the provincial Government. The Government should realize this responsibility of theirs very well. I hope that the Government would pay attention to my humble submission and direct attention to the interest of the people with the co-operation of trade organisations and relief societies. It does not matter if a handful of traders do not gain as a result of this.

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